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Cab 63/160

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Reference-- CAB 63 / 160

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~~SECRET~~

WAR CABINET.

THE SCANDINAVIAN SITUATION.

The possible use of force.

MEMORANDUM BY THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO.

In considering the question of whether the refusal of Sweden and Norway to comply with our desire to send Regular Allied Forces through their ports and railways to Finland is to be met by an attempt to force our way through, the first question that arises is - "Is it practicable?".

2. We might perhaps assume that our troops would not actually be fired on, whether at Narvik or Trondhjem. Otherwise the whole character and organisation of the expedition would have to be changed. But is that assumption enough? The expedition has, I understand, been planned on the assumption of willing co-operation by the Norwegians and Swedes in the ports and on the railways. Can the forces be got through and maintained without such co-operation? Probably the landing facilities at the ports and the railways depend upon electrical installations. In the case of Narvik these are understood to be at Gallivare. Nothing is easier than to switch off a current or, for the matter of that, for a skilled man to put a power-plant out of action. The Narvik railway, and probably the Trondhjem railway, is highly vulnerable - as all electric railways are. Even if there were no Scandinavian saboteurs, or workers who could be bribed, there are probably plenty of Germans to do the job. And, apart from that, is it likely that two Governments that had refused our appeal would co-operate to the extent of putting at

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our disposal the resources of their railways in men and material, involving presumably the concentration of a large amount of rolling stock and the dislocation of the economic system of the country?

3. Unless we can count on such facilities being freely given the expedition may result in a humiliating retreat and great loss of prestige.

4. The next point is to examine the pros and cons of the proposed operation, in order to decide how much risk it is worth while to take.

Possible Advantages.

5. The following advantages might be secured, provided that the operations are successful:-

- (1) To bring help to Finland and enable her to hold out longer.
- (2) This will serve to exhaust Russia and to strain both her resources and her transport, so that she will be unable to give much material assistance of any kind to Germany. It will also, in all probability, keep the war out of the Balkans. These are very great advantages from the point of view of limiting German oil supplies - possibly her Achilles Heel.
- (3) Germany, deprived of Russian resources, will also lose the Gällivare and other iron ore she receives at present from Sweden, as well as metals and fish from Norway, to the great advantage of our blockade.
- (4) Our blockade will be further strengthened by the fact that Norwegian territorial waters will no longer be available to German merchant shipping or to neutrals carrying supplies to Germany.
- (5) It may be possible to use ports such as Christiansand and Oslo to secure the naval control of the Skager Ræk, provided we can support our naval forces by air.
- (6) From Scandinavian aerodromes it might be possible later, if not at present, seriously to threaten German ports in the Baltic and the Kiel Canal. If we dare to adopt an offensive rôle we might even bottle up the Baltic.

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(7) We get the initiative to such extent as we have the courage and the capacity to use it. We may dislocate the German initiative.

6. These advantages, however, are rather watered down by the following considerations:-

- (a) we do not really bring much help to Finland because our disposable and maintainable force is so small and we refuse to allow it to be used at the decisive point, namely, in the isthmus. We shall cut a poor figure, engaging in a secondary theatre in the north, where the Russians are only making a diversion, while the Finns are being shelled and bombed to bits in the South of Finland;
- (b) consequently a Russian victory over Finland may only be delayed for a short time;
- (c) as to the Gallivare iron ore, it can be said that Germany without a doubt has ample completed war material for a summer campaign and probably considerable reserves of iron ore. When the ice melts she will have sea command of the Baltic except so far as we may be able to contest it from the air, and she will make a hard fight to recover the iron ore fields and to dominate Scandinavia. We shall have a hard fight to retain our initial advantages, particularly if Germany is able to do a deal with Russia as Napoleon did at the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807;

One of the results of the Treaty of Tilsit was that the Czar was given a free hand by Napoleon to attack Scandinavia, which he did. Sir John Moore was sent with a division (10,000 men) to Stockholm in 1808, but before he could render any assistance the Russians had over-run Finland, the King of Sweden was reported insane, and Moore's division was withdrawn. The whole operation is severely criticised by Napier.

- (d) the fourth advantage (the closing of the Norwegian "inner lead"), it can be said, becomes smaller every day, for the reason that as the days get longer fewer ships will slip through our naval patrols;
- (e) the fifth and sixth advantages can only be gained by running risks to home defence which so far the Air Staff and the members of the Cabinet are unwilling to face.

Possible Disadvantages.

7. We next have to consider the disadvantages, which can be summarised as follows:-

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- (i) The arrival of Allied Regular Forces (as distinct from volunteers) in Finland will provide the U.S.S.R. with a pretext to engage in hostilities with the British Empire all over Asia, which will vastly extend the scope and range of the war.
- (To compensate this it may lead to a more friendly attitude on Italy's part).
- (ii) Another result may be to bring Germany and Russia into more cordial relations, and Germany may help Russia against Finland. On a long view, the greatest danger the Allies have to face is the exploitation of Russian resources by German brains, which, eventually, will break our blockade. It is probable, however, that in course of time the thieves would fall out as they did in April, 1912, ^{18/2} nearly five years after the Treaty of Tilsit, when Russia joined the Coalition. Even so, however, Russia in the interval might do us a lot of harm in Iran, Afghanistan, India and the Far East and by putting her fleet, including her submarines, in the Baltic, the White Sea, the Black Sea, and the Far East at Germany's disposal.
- (iii) The forces with which we can reinforce Finland, Sweden and Norway are altogether insufficient, in combination with their own forces, to save them from a most frightful hammering, especially in the air - unless we are prepared to run risks at home that, so far, no member of the War Cabinet has been willing to face.
- (iv) If we have forced Sweden and Norway into this terrible position against their will, our moral position in the world will be weakened. This result will not really be affected by the fact that the ostensible reason for our action is to bring help to Finland, especially when the meagreness of the Allied Force, and the limitations under which it operates, became known. The Swedes and Norwegians will declare that the whole plan is a cynical camouflage to enable the Allies to get their hold on the Gallivare mine-fields and the Norwegian territorial waters. They will add that they had no reason to fear that either Russia or Germany, but for us. Russia had had enough fighting in Finland. And Germany would obtain all she could hope to get in Sweden without fighting for it. In the U.S.A. our action will be contrasted unfavourably with the last war, and the following statements by Grey to House on February 13th, 1915, will be recalled:-

"He did not think it fair to Greece to let her come into the war without some protection".

"He said they had never tried to influence Holland to come into the war, for they had never been able to send sufficient troops there to protect her from an invasion^x in the event she declared war on Germany".

^x The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. I, page 379.

(v) We are not in a position to supply even Finland, much less Sweden and Norway, with their indispensable needs in armaments, (including a.a. guns), ammunition and aircraft. Their own resources are totally inadequate in this respect, and will probably soon be bombed out of existence. That is an aspect of the question which we have not really faced.

8. Unless the latter disadvantage can be overcome, I fear it is decisive against the proposal to meet by force a refusal by Norway and Sweden to allow a free passage of troops to Finland. The fact is that we are not yet ready for a diversion on this scale.

9. The course I would advocate would be to send to the Finns the equivalent of the weapons and munitions that we had contemplated sending to Finland, and a proportion of what we should have sent to Norway and Sweden. We should also intensify efforts to obtain a continuous stream of international volunteers. It is true that this course would not give us all the theoretical advantages of the major operation, and particularly we should not occupy the Gallivare region. But we should obtain very considerable advantages by prolonging the Finnish resistance, and we should avoid the risk of a possible, if not probable, disaster / to Norway and Sweden owing to inadequate supply, and a very damaging loss of our moral advantage.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

1st March, 1910.

COPY OF NOTES GIVEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

Scandinavia 8th Mar. 7
Title

~~PERSONAL &
MOST SECRET.~~

4th March, 1940.

I enclose for your personal information a copy of some notes on the question of whether we should try and force a way through Norway and Sweden, which I wrote to clear my own mind yesterday.

I gave a copy to the Prime Minister after the Cabinet this morning. No-one else has seen them.

You will see that I come to the conclusion that instead of sending a small Allied Force to be used only in the north of Finland, it would be better to send the equivalent in armaments which could be used at the decisive point on the Isthmus. I believe it would be worth while to earmark some small percentage of our monthly output to sustain the Finns, and to get the French to do the same. I told the P.M. that if it would be useful at any time, I would be prepared to circulate something on these lines or to say it, but I thought to-day that wiser counsels were tending to prevail.

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.C.

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THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Temporary Headquarters:

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

From.....THE RUSSIAN SECTION

To.....MR. CLEMENT JONES.

Telephone: Oxford 47471

Date, 25th March, 1940

SUGGEST.....Note on Sir John Moore's Expedition to

Sweden in 1808 (two copies)

SIR JOHN MOORE'S EXPEDITION TO SWEDEN IN 1808

(Note: A very clear and detailed account of Sir John Moore's visit to Sweden in 1808, with reference to his diary and to state documents, is to be found in the Hon. J.W. Fortescue's History of the British Army, Vol. 6, Book 13, Chapter 17, pp.122-37. Another account which is in full agreement with the above is in the Life of Sir John Moore, by his brother James Carrick Moore, Vol. 2, Chapter 14, pp.76-96. There is also the diary of Sir John Moore, Vol. 2, Chapter 25, pp.203-231.)

There is little to be said about this incident, and in any case it has practically no bearing on events in Finland in 1808. Sir John Moore had been employed in a series of expeditions with small forces in Egypt, Sicily, and for a moment in Portugal, and was sent to Sweden on May 10th, 1808. One may connect this enterprise with the expedition which was designed in the spring of 1807 to save Stralsund and Danzig from capture by Napoleon after the battle of Eylau (17th February, 1807) and before that of Friedland (14th June), which was followed by the Russo-French armistice of June 21st and the meeting between Napoleon and Alexander I at Tilsit on June 25th. This expedition, in which Moore had no part, entirely miscarried, and this among other reasons was given by Alexander to Napoleon at Tilsit as a cause of his great dissatisfaction with delusive offers of British help.

After Tilsit, following protracted negotiations which were complicated by the complete lack of balance of the Swedish sovereign, King Gustavus Adolphus III, Moore was sent from England with a force of 12,000 men to Göteborg. His instructions were to act along the coast, where he had the support of Admiral Saumarez with eleven ships of the line and smaller vessels; but the Swedish sovereign throughout not only forbade him to land, but claimed the chief command, and intended to use him for an attack on either Zealand or Norway, under conditions which only too obviously made any such enterprise hopeless. To start with, while these negotiations were in process, Moore's troops were moved close to the English ports of departure, and he had a sharp correspondence with the War Minister, Lord Castlereagh, as

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to the small size and excessive number of the transporting vessels.

Sailing on May 10th from Yarmouth, and being delayed three days by fog, he reached Göteborg on May 17th, where he was not allowed to land his troops. The original agreement gave him the right to withdraw the expedition at his own discretion after giving due notice. There followed a protracted altercation between Moore and King Gustavus, in which the behaviour of the king, on the evidence given, can only be described as quite inconsequent and irrational, though Gustavus insisted throughout on his main demands that the troops should not land in Sweden, that he should himself have the chief command, and that the British force should be employed outside Sweden wherever he should choose to send it. Moore could in no way agree to these terms without disobedience to his instructions, though these were vaguely cast, and he had to refer to London through Colonel Murray, the Q.M.G. of the force, who returned from London on June 12th. Moore himself went straight to Stockholm, where he saw the King on June 17th, 18th, 20th and 23rd - on the last occasion being brought almost to lose his temper by the King's suggestions of deceit or even of open falsehood. The King himself changed his mind with regard to the suggestion of a British raid on Norway, which Moore was prepared to submit to the consideration of the Cabinet.

On June 17th the King had suggested that the British expedition should attempt a landing in Viborg; the Russians had already invaded Finland and the Swedish Army had retired as far north as Uleaborg; the vital fortress of Sveaborg had been treacherously surrendered on May 3rd, and Moore had to represent that the British force could only be surrounded and taken prisoner. He at first gave the impression that it was possible to refer this question to his Government, but on closer examination of his instructions next day decided that he could not do so and communicated his view to Stockholm. After the final talk between Moore and the King on June 23rd and the

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communication of Moore's refusal to go to Finland, the King ordered his arrest, and he was only able to escape in peasant disguise on June 29th to rejoin Admiral Saumarez on H.M.S. Victoria. The expedition sailed for England on July 3rd and reached the Downs on July 15th.

It will be clear from this account that Moore never landed his troops and that they did not ever fight. This narrative will also explain why they came away.

9th March, 1940.

Chatham House,
Balliol College,
Oxford.

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12

11th March, 1940.

My dear Toynbee,

I want to thank you for the admirable note on Sir John Moore's expedition to Sweden in 1808, which contains some information which I was anxious to obtain and which was not to be found in any of the general or military histories in my library.

I hope I have not caused your people too much trouble in asking for it.

As you are probably aware, it is by no means the first time that I have received assistance from the Royal Institute since the beginning of the war.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

Professor A.J. Toynbee, D.Litt., F.B.A.,
The Royal Institute of International Affairs,
Balliol College,
Oxford.

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SECRET.
&
PERSONAL.

11th March, 1940.

Spars

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At the discussion on Finland at the Cabinet this morning I had to consider whether I should develop the arguments contained in the note I sent you on the 4th March setting forth the pros and cons of forcible action in Norway and Sweden in connection with our plans to assist Finland.

On the whole, however, I came to the conclusion that the following new factors in the situation rendered it undesirable that I should do so:-

- (1) It is tremendously important to give the Finns all the support we can. The line we decided on this morning may make the difference between a durable and an unendurable peace. It should enable the Finns to adopt a much stiffer attitude in their negotiations.
- (2) Although from our own point of view I should prefer to send war material rather than actual military forces to Finland, in present circumstances an announcement limited to this would not, in my opinion, produce sufficient moral effect either on the Finns, or on the British, French or Scandinavian peoples, or on the world at large, (including Russia).

(3)

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.C.

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- (3) There is a good deal of indirect evidence to show that the Germans are working in favour of peace between Russia and Finland and detest the idea of an extension of the war to Scandinavia. This is an argument in favour of such an extension.
- (4) The figures you gave to the Cabinet on Saturday and again to-day about the amount of iron ore brought from Narvik to Germany enhance the importance of anything we can do to stop or delay the export of ore from Lulea when the Gulf of Bothnia thaws.
- (5) A preliminary draft I read during the week-end of a new report by Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd's expert committee on the German oil position indicates that in respect of oil in general, and lubricating, gas and diesel oils in particular, their position is probably precarious. That might deter the Germans from a Scandinavian expedition, or, if they were to undertake it, from simultaneous military offensive action anywhere else.
- (6) Pressure of the French Government - though this influences me less than others because in the last war I can never remember a difference arising between the two Governments in which the French did not make this particular appeal. It is just part of their ordinary technique for putting pressure on a friend.

On the whole, however, these considerations seem to me to tilt the balance (always rather an even one) between the courses open to us.

Even so, I am conscious of the disadvantage of the step towards which we are moving, and I should not be at all

sorry

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sorry if the Finns were to appeal for material help rather than for personnel. Whatever the nature of their appeal I am quite certain that if the war ^{in Finland} goes on we shall have to give more material help.

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QUESTION.

To ask the Prime Minister whether, in the event of the Finnish Government being unwilling to accept the Soviet terms and appealing for ^{further} help to the British and French Governments, the latter would be prepared to ~~refuse to~~ meet their appeal.

ANSWER.

*and will be continuing
to send*

As the House will be aware, both the French and British Governments have been sending material assistance to Finland, ^{which has been} already ^{of considerable value to the} forces of the Finnish Government.

In the circumstances contemplated in the Rt. Hon. gentleman's question His Majesty's Government and the French Government are ^{prepared} to give, immediately and jointly, further ^{assistance to the} help to Finland, using all available resources at their disposal.

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SECRET

DOMINIONS OFFICE,

DOWNING STREET, S.W.1.

10th April, 1940.

17

My dear Maurice,

During our High Commissioners' meeting this morning Massey raised the question as to whether we were taking any steps to sabotage the railways in Norway. It was suggested that a few determined ~~men~~ might yet be able to do much to make difficulties for the Germans in this respect, failing which it might be possible to take action by air. I replied that I did not know whether any plans had been laid in advance for such a contingency but that I would enquire and let them know at our next meeting.

Please forgive me troubling you with this, but perhaps you could let me know orally at tomorrow's Cabinet whether there is anything that I can usefully tell the High Commissioners.

*Yours
Anthony Eden*

The Right Honourable
Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

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MOST SECRET.

11th April, 1940.

18

(Norwegian)

No pre-war/plans have been made for the sabotage of Norwegian railways. It would be very dangerous for us to carry this out as we do not know the Norwegian plans. They may wish to use the railways themselves in their retirement, or to concentrate forces collected from the interior against the invaders at the ports.

It is up to their General Staff to carry out sabotage to meet the requirements of the military situation. They are known to have mined the railway from Narvik to Galivare, and one would suppose that a General Staff even of the Norwegian calibre would have some plans for other railways too.

You may remember that at the Cabinet yesterday I suggested that the subject of sabotage on the Norwegian railways ought to be tackled by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and it was recorded in the minutes. I expect they will be doing so.

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The Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P.

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~~SECRET.~~

PRIME MINISTER.

I suggest that it is a matter of the first importance to be sure that we have the collective opinion of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee on the operations which are now about to be undertaken in Norway. It does not follow that we are bound to accept their opinion but we ought to know what it is, not merely individually but collectively as a Sub-Committee.

Twenty-five years ago the attack on the Dardanelles was undertaken and later was the subject of an enquiry by a Royal Commission. In one respect the Government of the day came in for severe condemnation, namely, because they did not elicit the views of their Naval and Military advisers. It is true that their advisers were present at the War Council and did not protest against the decisions, and therefore were assumed by Ministers to have agreed. Afterwards it transpired that they had never agreed but had been reluctant to express their disagreement and the Commission condemned the Government for not eliciting their views.

The case, however, to-day is even stronger. In 1922-23 Lord Salisbury's Sub-Committee on National and Imperial Defence drew up an important report on the organisation of the C.I.D., which was published. One of its most important recommendations was the establishment of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee. The Chiefs of Staff, in addition to their individual responsibility to their respective Ministers and Councils, had a collective responsibility for watching the situation as a whole. They were to form a Super Chief of Staff in commission and were enjoined to meet together. Their responsibilities are enshrined in a formal warrant signed by the

Prime



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Prime Minister and issued to each Chief of the Staff - a provision inspired by and indeed pressed strongly by Mr. Churchill.

The operations we are about to embark on are essentially in the nature of conjoint operations. It is not enough that the Chiefs of Staff should have been present with Ministers and agreed to proposals. Ministers in the Military Co-ordination Committee may have obtained their individual views but this is not necessarily the same as their collective view. As one who has sat in Committees attended both by the Chiefs of Staff and by Ministers, as well as meetings of the Chiefs of Staff alone ever since their inception, I know well that when meeting alone they get down to "hard tasks" better than when they meet with Ministers. In addition, it gives them the opportunity to have the plans worked out in detail by the Joint Planning Organisation.

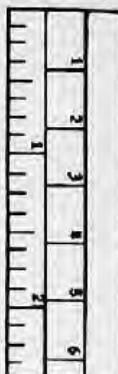
Up to now we have taken no decision in the military field without obtaining the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, who have usually had their details worked out by the Joint Planning Committee.

The decisions now before us are of such importance to the future of the war that we cannot afford to omit this safeguard.

It is all the more important because an attack on coast fortifications and a landing in a foreign country are probably the most difficult kind of operation that can be undertaken. Attacks of coast forts have scarcely ever succeeded unless either there was treachery within (as apparently at Oslo) or overwhelming force available (as at Alexandria).

Lord Salisbury will have a sharp eye on the question of procedure, and if anything goes wrong will undoubtedly press the point. So will Lord Trenchard,^X Lord Cavan and Lord Milne,^X all of whom know exactly what the modern constitutional procedure has been.

^X Former Chairmen of C.O.S. Sub-Committee.



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It is for these reasons that I submit that, unless it has been done already (which I do not think it has), the War Cabinet should have on record the collective view of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee on the operations.

I am, of course, fully conscious that man was not made for the machine but the machine for man. If this particular machine does not meet the exigencies of war we should scrap it, but up to now it has proved so useful a piece of machinery for focusing the combined views of all three General Staffs and of all sections of those Staffs that we should be very cautious about changing it.

17th April, 1940.

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Copy for Councillor

~~SECRET~~

[1919.10.22]

Not a very good moment to make a statement.

What can be said has for the most part been published or has appeared in Cabinet Minutes.

At the most interesting point I shall have to break off, because one simply cannot speak of impending operations even in this select company.

My own practice in last war

Manuscript Minutes.

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But will try and tell a connected
story - showing that from the outset
we have had a perfectly clear policy
which we are engaged in trying
to carry out.

You will remember that

MOST SECRET.

24

Monday, 8th April.

Between 4.30 and 5.30 a.m. minefields
laid in Norwegian territorial waters.

German warships and transports had
sailed before our first mine had been
laid and ~~were landed in~~ ^{had seized} all important
Norwegian ports, viz., Oslo,
Christiansand, Stavanger, Bergen,
Trondhjem and Narvik.

On the Monday morning when the Cabinet
met no news had yet been received of
the German landings.

Air reconnaissance ^{had} revealed one or two
groups of enemy ships including the
~~Gneisenau~~ ^{out} and two smaller ones
another big cruiser. These
were bombed. No hits, near misses.

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Naval dispositions taken to intercept

them.

(Thus it happened that)

A cruiser squadron which was embarking
troops for Narvik in case ^{they were} required, re-
landed them at ^{the Firth} a port and sailed to
join the main fleet.

The ^{main} result of the Naval dispositions
was the RENOWN'S short action with
Scharnhorst and another cruiser on the

next day, Tuesday, 9th April.
But, as soon as he learns of the German seizure of parts the
Tuesday, 9th April. Admiralty will forthwith dispatch
Monsieur Reynaud and Daladier arrived in
London. General policy of Allies
decided on, namely, -

Strong forces to be sent to ports in
Norway with a view to their re-capture
and holding securely the port and
railhead.

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^{W-W}
Narvik situation to be cleared up first.

French laid special stress on Narvik.
British Naval and Air Forces were already
carrying out operations off the coast
of Norway.

Urgent requests for assistance from
Norway to be met with a statement of
the operations already undertaken by the
Navy and Air Force, and by a statement
that forces were being rapidly
prepared -

The French Force of one Alpine Division
had received orders for embarkation.

^{not ready}
Two British Battalions ready at Scapa that
night.

^{W-W}
Further five Battalions ready within three
days.

Further four Battalions within fourteen
days.

^{decided on}
Occupation of Faroe Islands - which took
place a few days later. (17 June)
Now being rechristened for aerodromes

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(2)

A warning to be sent to Belgium urging admission of our troops.

SECURING COMMAND OF THE SEA.

In addition to Naval concentrations,

large numbers of submarines ^{were} concentrated in Kattegat and Skagerrak to interrupt German communications.

It was decided that as the Germans had stopped neutral shipping in these seas, submarines and aircraft should fire at any vessel met.

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War Diary.

15.4.40.

NORWEGIAN OPERATIONS.

German Ships sunk or damaged.

Pocket Battleship.
ADMIRAL SCHEER

Reported seen in tow, listing heavily. SPEARFISH fired 6 torpedoes at her, possible hits.

Battle cruisers.
SCHARNHORST
(or GNEISENAU)

Main armament damaged in action with RENOWN 10/4.

Cruisers.

BLUCHER
(or GNEISENAU)

Sunk in Oslo Fiord by mines and Norwegian batteries 9/4 (admitted by Germans).

KARLSRUHE

Torpedoed by TRUANT off Christiansand 9/4 and sunk.

Admitted by Germany
Hit by 500 lb. bombs from aircraft at Bergen 10/4 and probably sunk.

KOLN

- 5 - *Very badly damaged*

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Reference:-

CAB

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Cruisers (contd.)

EXIDIA

Reported by Norwegian
Adty. sunk at Oslo
by CLAV TRIGVISON.

Destroyers.

7 sunk at Narvik (including 3 up Rombaks Fjord) 13/4, some having been previously bombed by F.A.A.

1 possibly sunk by torpedo in 2nd D.F.
raid 10/4 on Narvik.

3 others damaged and on fire in same raid are probably included in the 7 above.

1 hit by aircraft at Trondheim 11/4.

1 probably hit by aircraft off
Trondheim 11/4.

Submarines.

1 sunk by ZULU 9/4.

1 destroyed in Narvik 13/4.

A great many mines have been laid

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Reference:

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Reference:-

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30

Transporta. Merchant Vessels, etc..
captured and sunk.

Total number is 32, of which about half
were sunk in the region of the
Skagerrak, Kattegat and Great Belt.
They have included up to date 3
tankers, 1 ammunition ship,
1 passenger ship, and a good many
the character of which could not be
identified in the dark.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

31

AIR MEASURES.

It was of the first importance to limit,
as far as possible, German air
activities.

These conducted mainly from Stavanger.

Consequently Stavanger bombed every day
since the beginning of the affair and
bombed by SUFFOLK on Wednesday.
^{200 5" shells}

Process continuing up to this moment.
So Menashmid Fighters over yesterday, Weather flighted
R.A.F. now have heavy long-range bombers
which have started to bomb ~~one of the~~
~~as far north as Trondheim~~
~~ports south of Narvik.~~

Object of these operations to facilitate
future Naval and Military operations.

In addition, Air Force mining Danish
Belt and the approach to
Wilhelmshaven in the River Jade.

Submarines also mining in Kattegat.
Kronstadt also of Albay aerotraffic

operating
 French submarines in Bight.
 Up to now have been the beginning of submarine operations
OPERATIONS AGAINST PORTS.

As already mentioned, Narvik tackled first.

Fortunately mines had been laid in West Flord and destroyers were available from that operation for preliminary reconnaissance.

Wednesday, April 10th.

Reconnaissance took place. One destroyer sunk and a munition ship blown up.

One bluster sunk
 Destroyers withdrew, with ~~two~~ lost.
Hardy ran ashore.

The Advance Party of the expedition sailed on Friday, April 12th.

Lord Coock commanding naval operations in "AURORA" from the Forth.

General Mackesy, with Advance Party of 350 troops, in "Southampton" from Scapa.

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Reference:-

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Reference:-

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33

This Party arrived on Sunday, April 14th.

The expedition includes oilers, net-layers, mine-layer and apparatus of an advance Naval Base.

Their objective was to get ashore and make contact with Norwegian troops in the neighbourhood of Narvik.

Saturday, April 13th, while they were at sea took place the Second Naval attack at Narvik. WARSPIKE and nine destroyers. Harbour cleaned up of enemy ships but town is still in enemy hands.

A day or two later first Brigade arrived in Advance Base at ⁱⁿ Hamstad, a ^{near} sheltered bay on an Island north-west of Narvik.

3k

The General has carried out his orders to make contact with Norwegians. He first landed his Advance Party of 350 men with himself at a point on the mainland called Selvanger, thirty miles north of Harvik.

THE PRESENT POSITION AT NARVIK.

Harbour strongly held by Germans, who have occupied Norwegian positions.

Good pill-boxes and concrete trenches.

Strength estimated 1,300 men. ▲

Strength estimated 1,300 men.

small German force is eight miles north of Narvik between [Semi-Brigade of] the British forces at ~~Jotunheim~~ and Narvik.

In the meantime, ^{just a week ago on} on Thursday, April 11th
a French Mission had arrived in London

-10-

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

35

in an aeroplane en route to Stockholm.
(M. Valandre - a general)
 A British Mission consisting of:-

Admiral Evans of the Broke:

Major-General Lewin: and

The British Air Attaché in Sweden

was associated with the French Mission.
Owing to bad weather mission only left last Friday
OBJECT OF MISSION.

To stiffen resistance of Swedes to any
to hanseatic
 German demands / to use Swedish
 communications; to re-assure the
 Swedes; and to promise support to the
 maximum of our power. Situation ^{was} too
unstable as yet
insecure to specify details.

Intention was for Admiral Evans to
 proceed to Norway to "jolly up" the
 Norwegian Government. Swedes refused
 to let him go. He has since come

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Reference:-

CAB

63 / 160

36

back with the Mission to England and
is to leave at once to join
King Haakon in Norway. Mission left
England April 12th and returned two
days ago.

The Mission, and all kinds of other
authorities ⁱⁿ from Sweden and Norway, were
~~demourning for~~ now urging rapid action against other
ports as well as Narvik - particularly
~~in order to give the & re-embark~~
~~at one of the ports south of Narvik,~~
~~as little~~
~~where the Government wished to settle~~
~~It was clear that if Norway was to be held in the war~~
~~as we appeared considerably to out-number~~
the Germans at Narvik it was decided
on Saturday last, April 13th, ~~not much~~
~~to divert~~
~~the Second Brigade of the Narvik force,~~
~~to some other destination in connection with~~
~~which was already at sea, to some port~~
~~the policy of gradually clearing the ports~~
~~south of Narvik.~~
as decided by the Supreme War Council

Chiefly
 As early as April 12th the Staffs were studying the possibility of securing ~~landing place~~ ^{suitable} ~~a footing at Namsos.~~ [On this day also broadcasts to encourage the Norwegians to resist began, and it was decided to land Norwegians from London on the coast of Norway to make clear we were coming.]

~~Reconnaissance was undertaken by~~
 On Sunday, April 14th, a Naval landing

~~attempt~~ party of 300 men from two cruisers, were possibly landing place was found, landed at night at Namsos. It was found possible to provide the birth. Their first reports showed it to be a difficult place. Visited by German aircraft every day. Four feet of snow. No concealment from the air. A very small place, partly evacuated. Short of fresh water and food. Not suitable British and French troops with a minimum of delay to say nothing of the Maquis, who are invaluable for ~~15~~ such purposes.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

38

for more than one Battalion.

Consequently it was decided to send the 146th Brigade further north. They arrived on Tuesday in the Ranen fiord, where there is a place called Mo, the most northerly point of the Norwegian main railways.

They were heavily bombed but not hit. As they included a 20,000 liner this spot was thought unhealthy and they put to sea. They were subsequently landed on the nights of April 16th and 17th at Namsos.

Meanwhile on Sunday, April 14th, a party of 600 seamen and marines in four sloops, with good anti-aircraft armament, sailed from Rosyth and arrived in

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

39

~~Alesund (Romsdal fiord) last night.~~

THE PRESENT MILITARY POSITION.

Germans.

Force at and around Oslo estimated at
 - but very uncertain. Infantry
 35,000 men (War Room). Situation not
 still ~~in the vague~~ very certain, but they appear to occupy
 the area south-east of Oslo right up to
 the Swedish frontier, and are spreading
 out south-west of Oslo in small
 parties. They have also worked along
 the Railway east of Oslo towards the
 Swedish frontier, which the Press say
 they have reached. They are also work-
 ing up towards ~~one of the ports south~~
~~of Narvik along the railway.~~

In spite of the heavy losses of trans-
 ports they seem able to maintain them-
 selves, no doubt living partly on the

40

Transports, number of which were seen yesterday by an air reconnaissance over N. Denmark

~~At one of the ports south of Narvik and district an estimated force of 3,000, of which 1,600 working up the railway against weak opposition towards Namsos, from which they were last reported separated by at least sixty kilometres.~~

Also working down railway ~~from port~~^{toward} Oslo, presumably to effect a junction with Oslo south of Narvik and in direction of far. But Norwegian are blowing up communications Alesund, Narvik as described above. There is much more

Norwegians.
At the time of the German descent, Norwegian completely, unless
Norwegians were not mobilised. Main
mobilisation depots captured by enemy.

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Reference:-

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41

I have not yet heard of any artiller
Short of ammunition. Few if any air-
craft, much depressed and morale low.
Command indifferent & according to press, much treacherous.
They are resisting more or less

spasmodically around Oslo. ~~One~~ Then
~~appear to be small detachments here & there e.g.~~
~~Battalion is at Haugesund and they are~~
~~in the Trondheim area, which are~~
resisting the Germans, to the east and
north of one of the ports south of
Harvik. British dispositions.

Considerable quantities of rifles, (50,000)
2 million rounds of long range & anti-tank with
ammunition and Bren guns are available
to arm Norwegians as soon as arrange-
ments can be made.

General Carton de Wiart landed in a
Norwegian Bay on the 16th April.

~~Scap~~
2 Bombed in harbour while in his ^{Scap} Jumbo
~~Flying Boat~~ for a few hours. Unhurted, but his
Aide-de-Camp wounded and taken home.

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Reference:-

CAB

63 / 160

42

The General has gone up to meet the Commander of a Norwegian force.

Naval, Military and Air dispositions have been made for further Allied operations. Very considerable Allied forces are available and operations will not long be delayed.

In the meanwhile we must all be content to put up with the fog of war.

Perhaps we shall not hear much for a few days if so we must keep our patience.

These things cannot be done in a day without long prior organisation.

We may hear stories of landings at this place or that place.

They may be false or true.

They may be feints to deceive the enemy like the successful feint at Ostend in 1916 or they may be temporary diversions to draw the enemy off from the real point.

I suggest it is best to refrain from speculation.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

BELGIUM.

(W.M.90th Annex to Minute 2).

As contemplated at S.W.C. an appeal was made to Belgium to admit troops, or at least to co-operate.

This has produced no result except the usual demonstration of "neutrality".

There are now strong reports that the Belgian King and Government have decided to remain neutral if Holland is attacked.

The Belgian Ambassador even asked for explanations about certain preliminary dispositions made by Gamelin in case Holland and/or Belgium were invaded and an advance had to be made at short notice.

4

He asked for an assurance that they
would not be sent in without an
invitation.

Effectively answered (Cabinet 93(40)10).

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Reference:-

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

✓

HOLLAND.

Many rumours of impending invasion.

Attack has been kept mounted since last November.

Could be launched at very short notice.

Various rumours.

Barriers removed on Maestricht Appendix.

Rubber boats issued.

To-day we hear stories of fresh wiring, which means the ~~attack~~
May be only "war of nerves".

But War Cabinet have to watch all these eventualities.

Cannot commit ourselves too deeply to

Scandinavia: - but even if the Western front is attacked, we shall continue the Norway campaign,

[April 12th.] Decided if Germans secured aerodromes or naval bases from Holland, as Russia did from Estonia, would

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

46
treat as if Germany had invaded
Holland.

In the event of German invasion of
Holland, great loss of prestige if do
nothing. Best policy to invade.

French would not agree to tell Belgians.]

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

ITALY.

47

Very menacing situation.

Press suddenly turned against us. Making difficulties with Wafd in Egypt.

Mussolini rapidly anti-Ally.

Ciano goes to bed.

King, Badoglio, Grandi, Due d'Aosta and public opinion reported anti-war.
Navy & Air Force still very friendly.
The Fascist leaders all for war.

Trying hard to push over news of our Scandinavian successes.

But hard to surmount barrage of censorship.

Talk with P.M.

Found him not unduly perturbed.

Thinks, if Italians act, not likely to be outside Adriatic.

48

But it may even be a bluff arranged at
Brenner.

Have sufficient ships for Mediterranean,
but destroyers ^{a weak link} ~~very light~~. The French
have a certain number

Different suggestions:-

Corfu.
Dalmatian Ports.
From Albania to Slovenia.
Roumania.
Gibraltar (with Spain).
Balearic Isles.

Ships still running.

~~Ministry of Marine and Air Ministry~~

~~friendly to Attachés.~~

If they invade Jugo-Slavia War Cabinet's
view is that we ~~should~~ ought to attack
them.

Otherwise they will run the Balkans &
we shall only have to intervene a few
weeks later C.O.S. working it ^{out} ²⁻
Meanwhile we are ~~completing~~ ^{finishing} the French
program to build up the French Fleet.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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Reference:-

CAB

63 / 160

49

BALKANS.

Threat to police Danube.

Danube Commission proposal.

Policing of river.

Goeland Company.

General funk of Germany, Russia and
Italy.

Vienna rumours.

JAPAN.

Dutch East Indies.

50

NORMA.

On Monday the 8th April between 4.30 and 5.30 a.m. minefields were laid in Norwegian territorial waters.

But German warships and transports had sailed before our first mine had been laid.

As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons on April 9th -

"There is no doubt that the German plans for the invasion of Norway and Denmark were made and put into operation long before the Allied mining of Norwegian territorial waters".

On Tuesday the 9th April the Supreme War Council attended by M. Reynaud and M. Daladier met in London, at which

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

51

it was decided that forces should be sent to ports occupied by the Germans on the Norwegian seaboard. In each case the first object of the Allies will be to recapture from the Germans and to hold securely the port and railhead.

The particular importance of securing Narvik, and so denying Germany access to the iron ore deposits, was stressed.

The French force of one Alpine Division earmarked for Scandinavia would be ready to sail within two or three days.

Two British battalions ready at Scapa that night. More to follow. British Naval and Air Forces were carrying on operations off the coasts of Norway.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160Wednesday, April 10th.

52

First British success at Narvik. German destroyers sunk. A German Ammunition ship had also been sunk.

Air Attack on Stavanger Aerodrome.

British aircraft heavily engaged, but 1 German bomber had been damaged.

Thursday, April 11th.

Further attacks on Stavanger Aerodrome.

Further Naval and Air reconnaissance.

"Admiral Scheer" torpedoed. Reported listing heavily, escorted by tug and 2 destroyers.

Friday, April 12th.

Expedition sailed at noon this day.

Lord Cork in charge of Naval side in H.M.S. Aurora from the Forth.

General Mackesy (and 350 troops) in H.M.S. Southampton from Scapa at the

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

53

same time. Objective to get ashore and make touch with Norwegian troops in the neighbourhood of Narvik.

(Confidential Annex of April 12th).

Staffs studying possibility of securing a footing at Namsos with view to recapturing Trondhjem.

Saturday, April 13th.

Second British success at Narvik carried out under Admiral Whitworth in H.M.S. Warspite with 9 destroyers.

No enemy warships now left at Narvik, but town still in enemy hands.

In view of the second Naval success at Narvik it was decided to send the 2nd Brigade of the Narvik force to land at Namso, and the scene of activity now moves south in the Trondhjem direction.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

54

Sunday, April 14th. Trondhjem.

A Naval landing-party of 300 men from two Cruisers landed at night at Namsos to the north of Trondhjem. This was part of an operation whose object was to capture Trondhjem.

It had been the intention also to land the 146th Brigade at Namsos, but reports from Namsos showed it to be a difficult place; under four feet of snow; no concealment from air; Namsos itself a very small place; partially evacuated; short of fresh water and food. Not suitable for more than one battalion.

Therefore decided to hold the 146th Brigade away from Namsos and look for

1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

55

a landing place elsewhere.

Trondhjem (continued).

Meanwhile (also Sunday night, April 14th),

a party of 600 marines and seamen
sailed from Rosyth in four sloops with
good anti-aircraft armament. Intended
to land at Aalesund on April 17th.

The French contingent comprising the
Chasseurs Alpins due to sail into
Trondhjem on or about 18th.

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63
160

Thursday, April 11th.

(Admiral Evans.)

(Major-General Lewin

(Air Attaché in Sweden)

British representatives on Allied Mission.

Admiral Evans, after his Mission to

Stockholm to proceed to Norway to put
fresh heart into Norwegian Government.

War Cabinet 88(40), Minutes 1 and 6

Friday, April 12th.

Anglo-French Mission leave for

Stockholm.

War Cabinet 89(40), Minute 5, page 27

The 4 Battalions, which would form the first part of the force to land would follow closely after General Mackesy.

*[See Confidential Annex, 12th April,
1940, 89th Conclusions.]*

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

57

22nd April, 1940.

Dear Lord Samuel,

Here is the question which the Admiralty think would be particularly useful at the present time, with their reply.

As you will see it is confined to the recent operations in Norwegian waters. I fancy that they are inclined to consider that it would serve no useful purpose and might indeed confuse the public if they went back over the whole of the old ground, including the Courageous, the Royal Oak, and hoc genus omne.

If the Admiralty desires any alteration tomorrow, and these things in these days are never static as you know, I will, if I may, speak to you over the telephone.

Yours sincerely,

M.F.

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Samuel, G.C.B.,
52, Porchester Terrace,
W.2.

(No. 200)

57

22nd April, 1940.

Dear Lord Samuel,

Here is the question which the Admiralty think would be particularly useful at the present time, with their reply.

As you will see it is confined to the recent operations in Norwegian waters. I fancy that they are inclined to consider that it would serve no useful purpose and might indeed confuse the public if they went back over the whole of the old ground, including the Courageous, the Royal Oak, and hoc genus omne.

If the Admiralty desires any alteration tomorrow, and these things in these days are never static as you know, I will, if I may, speak to you over the telephone.

Yours sincerely,

int.

s

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Samuel, G.C.B.,
52, Porchester Terrace,
W.C.

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

Viscount Samuel

QUESTION.

To ask H.M. Government whether they are aware that the German Government is claiming to have sunk or severely damaged a large proportion of the British Fleet during the operations in Norwegian Waters, and whether H.M. Government will state the full measure of our naval losses since the German invasion of Norway and Denmark, contrasting them with the mendacious claims made by the enemy.

REPLY.

His Majesty's Government are aware of the recent flights of fancy of the enemy propaganda department which have rivalled its previous achievements on the occasion of the Battle of the River Plate and the ignominious end of the GRAF SPEE. I therefore welcome the opportunity afforded me by the noble Lord of stating the exact measure of our losses.

Since the invasion of Norway and Denmark three destroyers, one Submarine and one Admiralty trawler have been sunk and a fourth destroyer, H.M.S. HARDY, was beached after being torpedoed. One Cruiser and two destroyers have been damaged but have returned safely to their bases. H.M.S. RENOWN and H.M.S. ROBNEY have both received hits. No serious damage was done in either case nor was the fighting efficiency of the ships in any way affected. In addition, as has been announced in the press, four other destroyers have received some damage not of a serious nature and three cruisers have received trifling damage from bomb splinters.

The Noble Lord's request that I should contrast these losses with those which the enemy claim to have inflicted is no easy task since consistency has never been a characteristic

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Reference - CAB 63 / 160

59

of the enemy's propaganda and their claims, rising in direct proportion to their losses, are totalled by no known rules of arithmetic. Their latest claims appear to total 5 battleships, 2 battlecruisers, 1 aircraft carrier, 18 cruisers, 11 destroyers and 11 submarines sunk or seriously damaged during the period in question.

I need only add that this statement has the same claim to be accepted as the oft repeated announcement that German airmen had sunk H.M.S. ARK ROYAL.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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~~SECRET~~

60

SCANDINAVIA - 25th APRIL, 1940.

I.

Such advantages as we have gained from the German invasion of Norway can be summed up as follows:

- (1) A substantial reduction in the strength of the German surface fleet - armoured ships, cruisers and especially destroyers.
- (2) Some damage to the German Air Force. Some small part of which must have been severely shaken by air attacks.
- (3) The effect on Italy and some of the Balkan States of our stubborn resistance.

We must follow up these advantages as far as possible. In particular -

- (a) We must take every opportunity to hammer the German Navy. Warships located in ports or fiords such as Trondhjem, Bergen, or Kristiansand, or Oslo, or at sea, must at once be attacked by every available means - surface ships, submarines or aircraft.
- (b) Air bombardments must continue as long as they are giving adequate results.
- (c) We must keep the Norwegian resistance going as long as we can owing to its reaction elsewhere.

II.

The Military situation is precarious. Our attempts to interrupt the direct sea communications between Germany and Oslo are no longer successful. It is not much use mining the Baltic so long as the Sound remains open. Our submarines are being harried in the Kattegat and Skaggerak, and are no longer a serious threat to German sea communications. Subject therefore to occasional and sporadic interruption, we have to assume that Germany will be able to put into Norway through Oslo as many troops as she wishes, and to maintain them by sea.

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CAB 63 / 160

From this it seems to follow that we cannot hope to drive the Germans out of southern Norway for a very long time to come, and it will be difficult even to sustain ourselves. But we must sustain the Norwegians to the best of our powers, make step by step defence, and keep the war going in south and central Norway as long as possible.

III.

To ameliorate the Military situation the immediate steps to be taken are as follows:

- (a) If the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs will consent, to mine the Sound as well as the Fjords.
- (b) To reinforce our troops based on Andenes to the utmost extent that the port and the road and railway communications can maintain.
- (c) To provide large quantities of explosives and other materials for demolitions so as to enable the Norwegian Forces and our own to interrupt the German communications. Royal Engineer and Pioneer Battalions trained in demolitions, and especially railway and road demolitions, should be sent as soon as possible, and further Forces should be trained for this purpose.
- (d) Search should be made for aerodromes, temporarily on lakes, but looking to the future on land, and fighter aircraft should be sent.

IV.

As regards Namsos, it looks as though this post might have to be evacuated in the near future. The best plan if practicable would be to move the base either to Mosjoen, Mo, or Bodø, which are connected by road with Namsos and Trondhjem. It is understood they are being reconnoitred. But we should hold on at Namsos as long as possible, as our detachment contains part of the German Garrison of Trondhjem, and remains a perpetual threat to Trondhjem. The immediate policy therefore should be as follows -

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REFERENCE:- CAB 63 / 160

(62)

- (1) To hold on as long as possible at Namsos.
- (2) To provide anti-aircraft guns and lights there as soon as possible.
- (3) To reconnoitre immediately Mosjoen, Mo and Bodø with a view to withdrawal there if necessary.
- (4) To prepare immediately in full detail a plan for the withdrawal of the Allied Forces from Namsos in case an early withdrawal is unavoidable. If possible this withdrawal should be to the ports further north mentioned above.

V.

On a longer view we have to contemplate the possibility, if not the probability, that we shall not be able to maintain ourselves for more than a few weeks or at the most months in southern Norway. It is essential, however, that we should maintain a foothold in Norway, and if possible a capital from which King Haakon and his Government can function.

It is equally essential that we should clear up the situation at Narvik and maintain a force on the Swedish frontier.

In addition, looking to the future we must hold one or two points on the Norwegian coast from which the Navy can harass the enemy's submarines. If possible, these advance bases should include landing grounds from which our aircraft can take off. The following would appear to be the steps to be taken:

- (a) To reinforce our land forces at Narvik, including some really mobile troops (Chasseurs Alpins). This is in hand.
- (b) To send an aircraft carrier containing fighters and bombers to the Narvik region to support the Army in its operations, and if possible to prevent reinforcement by air.
- (c) Reconnaissance for aerodromes in this region; this is essential in order that we may be able to drop mines and otherwise harass the Germans in the Gulf of Bothnia.

63

- (d) Anti-aircraft and anti-submarine defences for Narvik.
- (e) Careful reconnaissance of the Norwegian coast with a view to the selection of two bases, one at or near Narvik, the other further south, which can be made bases for light craft; if possible with an aerodrome which can be used by destroyers and aircraft for harrassing the Germans all along the Norwegian coast. Strong defences will have to be built up.
- (f) Select a temporary seat for the Norwegian Government, e.g. Tromsø.
- (g) Immediate steps should be taken for re-equipping and training Norwegian Forces. A small Anglo-Norwegian Commission should be formed for this purpose.

VI.

Chiefs of Staff Organisation (? J.P. Committee) should be instructed to prepare plans to counter the threat to our East Coast commerce, which will arise in the event of a German occupation of the coast of southern Norway. The kind of measures required would seem to be as follows:

- (1) Additional aerodromes and landing grounds in the Shetlands from which we can take off in order to shorten the distance in attacking enemy aerodromes and submarine bases in Norway.
- (2) A possible destroyer base in the Shetlands from which we can harass the Norwegian coast.
- (3) Light defences for the above.
- (4) Anti-aircraft defences and aerodromes in the Faroe Islands, as well as patrols to prevent their use by U boats.

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CAB 63 / 160

TREASURY CHAMBERS,

S.W.1.



In any reply
please quote Regd. No.



64

TREASURY CHAMBERS,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.
(Tel: WHITEHALL 1234.)

26th April 1940.

Min Secret

Dear Hankey,

I enclose copy of a letter
from the Admiralty which you may
like to have.

Yours sincerely,

S.D. Waley

The Right Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

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COPY

65
Military Branch,
Admiralty,
S.W. 1.

25th April, 1940.

SECRET

Dear Waley,

You will probably wish to know about Norwegian gold so far as we know the story.

A telegram was received from a Naval Authority in Norway on 20th April saying that the Norwegian Government had asked for 50 tons of gold to be shipped to England, to be sent over in three lots.

We heard last night that 16 tons was on its way, and I arranged with Bolton of the Bank of England that it should be turned over to the Royal Bank of Scotland at Edinburgh on arrival. This was done this afternoon and I believe it is now en route for London.

We can't tell yet when and how the remainder will arrive but I will let Bolton know as soon as news is received.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) R. JONES

for S. GILMOUR.

S.D. Waley, Esq., C.B., M.C.,
H.M. Treasury,
S.W. 1.

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Reference:-
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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

26th April, 1940.

Dear Waley,

Many thanks for sending
me a copy of a letter from the
Admiralty about Norwegian gold.
I was most relieved to read it.

Yours sincerely,

S.D. Waley, Esq., C.B., M.C.

67

PRIME MINISTER.

I think you will find it worth while to glance through the attached very brief summary of a book called "Die See-Strategie des Weltkrieges" by Vice-Admiral A.D.Wolfgang Wegener. I gather that the book was obtained in May, 1939, and sent to the Admiralty. As Colonel Menzies pointed out at the time, the book pointed to the probabilities:-

- (1) that Denmark and part of Norway might be seized as a jumping off ground;
- (2) that the trade routes would then be attacked with all available Naval and Air power working from such shore bases as could be seized and held, or could be concealed, and from supply ships.

I gathered also that when Southern Norway is secured the Shetlands would be the next aim in this theatre. It was with a similar thought in my mind that I suggested in my short memorandum a few days ago that appropriate measures in the Shetlands should be considered if they had not already been taken.

All this emphasizes the point I made in my earlier note that the big thing is still to smash up the German Navy. I do not believe we have much to fear from the occupation of Norway if we can continue the process of reducing the German Fleet as successfully as hitherto.

If you have no objection I should rather like to circulate the summary to the War Cabinet, but without this commentary.

In any event I should like to have the copy back.

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Reference:- **CAB 63 / 160**

27th April, 1940.

68

~~POST SECRET.~~

28th April, 1940.

My dear Edward,

I enclose a note for circulation to the War Cabinet covering a summary of a book published by a German Admiral apparently in the spring of 1939, which has rather an interesting bearing on the recent German attack on Norway. I actually received it from the Secret Service.

The Prime Minister has agreed to the circulation of the note, as you will see from the attached minute.

Would you kindly have my covering note and the enclosure re-produced. I think before it is circulated I should like to show it to the First Lord, so would you ask your people to let me have a carbon for this purpose.

Yours ever,

Sir Edward Bridges, K.C.B., M.C.

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69

~~MOST SECRET.~~

WAR CABINET.

THE GERMAN ATTACK ON NORWAY.

Note by the Minister without Portfolio.

-
1. The Prime Minister has agreed with me that the attached very brief summary of a German book entitled "Die See-Strategie des Weltkrieges" by Vice-Admiral A.D. Wolfgang Wexener might be of interest to the members of the War Cabinet.
 2. I understand that the book was received by the Foreign Office in May, 1939. The book pointed to the possibility —
 - (a) that Denmark and part of Norway might be seized by the Germans in the event of war as a jumping off ground;
 - (b) that trade routes would then be attacked with all available naval and air power, working from such shore bases as could be seized or held, or could be concealed, and from supply ships;
 - (c) that from Norway there might be a "spring across the North Sea to win a geographical position, e.g. the Shetlands (the door to the Atlantic);"
 3. (4) ~~that~~ ^{however,} the book appears to assume a more powerful German Fleet than is now left to them.

N.P.

(Intd.) H.

28th April, 1940.

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Reference:—

CAB 63 / 160

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MOST SECRET.

WAR CABINET.

THE GERMAN ATTACK ON NORWAY.

Note by the Minister without Portfolio.

1. The Prime Minister has agreed with me that the attached very brief summary of a German book entitled "Die See-Strategie des Weltkrieges" by Vice-Admiral A.D. Wolfgang Wegener might be of interest to the members of the War Cabinet.
2. I understand that the book was received by the Foreign Office in May, 1939. The book pointed to the possibility -
- (a) that Denmark and part of Norway might be seized by the Germans in the event of war as a jumping off ground;
 - (b) that trade routes would then be attacked with all available naval and air power, working from such shore bases as could be seized or held, or could be concealed, and from supply ships;
 - (c) that from Norway there might be a "spring across the North Sea to win a geographical position, e.g. the Shetlands (the door to the Atlantic);"
 - N.P. 3. (d) ^{Assume} that the book appears to assume a more powerful German Fleet than is now left to them.

(Intld.) H.

28th April, 1940.

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Reference:-
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~~TOP SECRET.~~

70

NORWAY.

1. The plan that has now emerged out of recent discussion for retiring northwards in the event of its becoming desirable to evacuate Narvik is an admirable one which goes some way to meet both the military and political requirements of the present situation. It should go far to cover the Narvik operations; and it should give us time to establish the Norwegian King and Government in the north of Norway; but we ought to envisage stabilising a line of defence at some point where the distance between the coast and the Swedish frontier is short, one flank resting on deep water and the other on mountains impassable to mechanised forces.

2. The Germans are not likely to let us alone as long as we remain in Norway, so the more we can entangle them and lure them on into difficult places where their own communications may be liable to damage by raids from the coast and from the air and the more we can compel them to expend effort and petrol and oil; and the longer their sea communications with Norway are exposed to vexatious losses from attacks by submarines and aircraft - the more all this happens the better for us.

3. We ought to keep the operations alive as long as possible without undue loss in order to make Norway a running sore, just as the Spanish Peninsula was a running sore to Napoleon.

4. And just as in the Peninsula War we armed guerillas to harass communications and isolated posts and used our Fleet (e.g. on the coast of Catalonia) to raid their communications, so we should endeavour to make things difficult for the

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the Germans in Norway. But we have the added advantage that for bulky supplies and reinforcements the Germans have to cross the open sea.

There is one immediate step however, which is still required, and that is to put in at once larger forces than are at present contemplated at the next halting place (which I will not mention by name in writing) with a view to creating a defence line into which troops coming by road can retire, and to compel the enemy if he wishes to attack it with any prospect of success to deploy substantial forces. (In the absence of aerodromes seaplanes or float-planes ought to be provided.)

In a word the provision contemplated at the places in question is at present on too small a scale. If the resources of the ports permit more A.A. defences and artillery should be supplied.

(Intd.) H.

Treasury Chambers,
29 April, 1940.

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Reference - CAB 63 / 160

SECRET.

72
30th April, 1940.

Dear Harris,

The First Lord has approved the summary of a German book entitled "Die See-Strategie des Weltkrieges" by Vice-Admiral A.D. Wolfgang Wegener, which Lord Hankey is proposing to circulate to members of the War Cabinet, and of which he sent a copy to Sir Edward Bridges on the 28th April. He asks if you will, therefore, have it reproduced and circulated.

I enclose a revised copy of the covering note.

Yours sincerely,

R.M.J. Harris, Esq.,
Offices of the War Cabinet.

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

~~SECRET~~

73

1st May, 1940.

I shall have to reply next week in the House of Lords to the debate on the Norwegian affair.

Lord Strabolgi has given me notice that he intends to raise the question of why the Navy did not attack the forts. He will suggest that Naval opinion was in favour of such attack and that the Government refused to let them have their way. He will pile up a technical case that the forts were weak; that there was no head cover; and that there were no U-Boats or mines in the Fiord. He will say that it is a crying scandal that the Navy was not used to attack. He sounded rather bitter about it.

I have no doubt that I can concoct a good reply. I suppose I should have to say that, if there had been no aircraft and no submarines, all he says might have been true. But that in order to defend bombarding ships against those two forms of attack such large Naval forces would have had to be assembled that the general Naval

situation

The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, C.H., M.P.

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situation in the North Sea would have been affected detrimentally. But I think one could add that when the Fiord had been entered the difficulties would only then have begun, as we should have found the enemy dug in and prepared for a tenacious defence.

But I would much rather have a brief from the Admiralty on the point if you could manage to supply it.

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Reference-CAB 63 / 160

~~SECRET.~~

2nd May, 1940.

75

In continuation of my letter of yesterday about a passage for my speech on the bombardment of Trondhjem. I have myself dictated the enclosed. Could you have it vetted in your Department.

The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, C.H., M.P.

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Reference:-

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76

The noble Lord Strabolgi has suggested that we ought to have bombarded the forts at the entrance to the Trondhjem Fiord. In fact, if I understand him aright, he suggests that the Government have over-ruled Naval opinion and refused to allow us to do so.

I can assure your lordships that this statement is not in accordance with the facts.

The noble Lord's suggestion of a bombardment is, of course, a most reasonable one. It was studied from the outset. Details were worked out and twice it has actually been in the programme. A naval bombardment is always a very dubious operation. Ships are built to fight ships and not shore forts which have certain advantages over them. There have been notable cases in history where the ships have won, but usually this has been in cases, either of complete surprise or where the coast defences were extremely weak. The bombardment of the outer forts of the Dardanelles in February 1915 is a case in point. In the vast majority of cases however, the bombardment has not been a success and the

Dardanelles

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

Dardanelles supplies another notable example in the repulse with heavy loss of our attack on the Narrows in March 1915.

Under modern conditions however, when submarines and aircraft are available to the defence very elaborate arrangements are necessary to protect the bombarding ships. This involves the concentration of great numbers of anti-submarine and anti-aircraft defences, making a large demand on the total forces available in a theatre of war.

There is also the uncertainty even if the bombardment succeeds and the forts are silenced whether the fruits of victory can be reaped. Naval gun fire is not at its best in dealing with entrenched and carefully concealed troops, as I, myself, have witnessed at close range during the Dardanelles campaign.

Before we could have delivered a Naval attack the Germans had had time to dig themselves in and prepare their defence. Your lordships will remember that even at Narvik where the land defences were not serious and the enemy's naval

defences

78

defences were overwhelmed, we were unable, after occupying the whole of the fiord, to disembark under naval fire at Narvik itself. Military operations had to be undertaken. We might well have encountered exactly similar conditions at Trondhjem - indeed it is difficult to believe that we should not.

However this may be, our decision was taken on the unanimous advice of our highest Naval, Military and Air advisers, supported by the officer chiefly responsible in the theatre of war, and I cannot believe that your lordships will find us to blame for following their advice.

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SECRET.

2nd May, 1940.

I have looked into the question of the aircraft which were destroyed by the Germans on Lake Lesja.

The story you were told about a shortage of lubricating oil is, I am assured, completely untrue. The Gladiators put up a splendid fight, in which they claim to have brought down no less than eight Heinkels. The only place they could subsequently land was at one point at the end of the Lake, owing to the difficulty of finding elsewhere enough distance for getting into the air off the Lake. Here they were bombed by continuous raids and thirteen out of eighteen were destroyed. The Lake then thawed. Unfortunately the A.A. guns that might otherwise have been there were carried in the only transport to be sunk.

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

The Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna,
70, Pall Mall,
S.W.1.

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Reference-CAB 63 / 160

SECRET.

3rd May, 1940.

My dear Eric,

I send you a copy of a letter I wrote to
Reggie McKenna yesterday about his story of the destruction
of the aeroplanes on the Lake and the alleged lack of
lubricating oil.

I am assured by the Air Ministry that the whole story is absolute moonshine. I wish people would not repeat tittle tattle of this kind, and I am glad I stood up to Reggie.

Apart from that episode I very much enjoyed the dinner and especially meeting you both.

Yours ever,

The Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Phipps, G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,
West Stowell House,
Marlborough, Wilts.

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Midland Bank Limited

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Telephone:
National 1234.

Poultry,
London E.C.2.

3rd May, 1940.

My dear Maurice,

Very many thanks for your letter. Ill-informed gossip is thus dissipated and truth once again prevails. I do not find people here in the least disheartened by the news from Norway.

It was a great pleasure to see you and Lady Hankey again.

Yours ever,

Reggie

The Rt. Hon.
Lord Hankey, G.C.B., &c., &c.,
Treasury Chambers,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

Want of ^{surprise} initiation slowly but
Nevada is dependent and takes no notice
No plan to meet it - in a word, S.S.
Should take initiative in this
Would have favourable influence
on neutrals.

[? U.S.A + civilians
? Would be ^{more} friendly action
a favourable influence?
S write.

Each time it invades a country that
country resists twice; first feel that
+ secondly our attack a ^{bad} effect

[That is because they refuse to
invite us in & even to have a staff
representative.]

Effort on morale of U.S. - told impossible
from me
^{Answer} Shown by Supt + other cards that we
present policy enables to cover
stocks of food
[Not carrying much in Norway]

Uncertainty between Traditions 83
Norfolk

Markish

Decided at ~~supper~~ Mr. Gord
Lundberg, Avery, Lloyd.

Först i den skriva debatten
representerar man sitt
hänsyn.

Count t

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Well known to were mainly
the two

We should surely retain visible

Asked for a statement on bankruptcy

Treat

the people in the Islands very quiet
prepared to stand ready if at the word
of our leader to defend the W.O. or
to evacuate

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SA

Lord Hankey

Although yesterday's newspapers had been hinting that the Prime Minister's statement would not be of a pleasant nature, the attitude of the Press this morning is one of unconcealed disappointment. The newspapers as a whole, however, can definitely be divided into two sections. In the first place the opposition papers come out with attacks that are more vicious than logical, attacks which are made mostly on the political direction of the war but also on the Service experts responsible for advising the Cabinet. Some of the newspapers which cannot be described as opposition, whilst being less vicious in their attacks, clearly share the general disappointment and are demanding a complete investigation. On the other hand, and this applies more particularly to the provincial Press, a considerable number accept the unpleasant news much more calmly and proceed to examine with less heat but with great seriousness the reasons which have led to the situation in an attempt to learn the real lessons and profit by them for the future.

In so far as the political attacks are concerned, opposition papers condemn what they describe

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as complacency and satisfaction which they declare has been the keynote of many of the recent speeches of British Ministers which they now consider has spread doubts in the minds of the British public and at the same time quite failed to offset the damage to the prestige of the country in neutral countries.

The main criticisms may best be cited as follows:-

Why was the Finnish Force dispersed and only small forces kept available when it must have been known that if German aggression took place it would take place with large Forces?

If aeroplane difficulties were foreseen, and they should have been foreseen, why send Forces into action not equipped to meet these difficulties?

Why decide to counter a suspected aggression unless determined to counter it effectively?

Did the Government act with all the speed and energy possible?

The Government is accused by the Opposition Press of having grossly under-estimated the ruthless power and enormous resources of the enemy and they declare (as in the case of the "News Chronicle") that the statement now raises the whole conduct of the war as showing that we have strategically suffered a reverse and politically a major defeat. It is pointed ...

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pointed out that it is still within our power to save the remainder of Norway and the importance of this being done must not be under estimated. The demand is made that the coastline must be preserved from becoming the hide-out of submarines and Narvik held at all costs. This paper ("News Chronicle") says the reverse calls for a fundamental reassessment both of leadership and the scale and tempo of the national effort and it thinks, as indeed do all of the most critical of the papers, that the country is more than ever determined to do all that is required to win the war. There are in several cases demands for a complete investigation in order to determine responsibility, not with any desire to punish but because "the war can only be won by good Ministers and skilful Generals. The duty is to decide if mistakes were made and in that case weed out the men who made them." Even in some of the more important provincial papers, who are quite calmly examining the situation, there is a demand for the fullest details in the coming debate. The "Yorkshire Post", for instance, which describes the Trondheim effort as an excusable failure calls for

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a full debate which "must be fearless and frank", adding "we have written-off Southern Norway, but we have to meet a new situation grim and arduous, but still full of hope." "The gains and losses" it adds, "can only depend on what we are able to learn from them". The "Birmingham Post" recognises that our Forces have so far not been commensurate with our desire but that it is important not to relax efforts, but it ends with the warning "If on Tuesday the Prime Minister can tell the House of Commons that we have started our Scandinavian effort anew and/or that we have relaxed in Scandinavia in order to press our case in the Mediterranean, then the National Government will still have national support. If not, then criticism (at present withheld on national grounds) may become the more active for its previous suppression. For ourselves, we stand fast by the Prime Minister's suggestion that, in Norway, we have only "begun to fight" - that failure in Trondheim merely means renewed effort elsewhere."

In general the provincial press is almost completely free from the purely political attacks made in some of the London papers, but while adopting an attitude ...

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attitude of calm and keen examination of the situation,
coupled with every evidence of a determination to
spare no effort to win the war, it is clearly uneasy
at the present situation.

Geo. R. Steward

3rd May, 1940.

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SECRET.

3rd May, 1940.

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I have to speak in the Debate in the House of Lords on the Norwegian affair next Wednesday.

I have learnt that one of the points that will be made against the Government is that the force assembled for Finland, which was thoroughly equipped for Winter warfare, was subsequently dispersed, and that the N.W.E.F. which was sent to Norway was not properly equipped.

I suppose the questions that I will be expected to answer will be as follows:

- (1) How was it that the Finland force was not kept in being when we knew that the Germans had assembled transports and were practising embarkation and disembarkation?
- (2) Why was the N.W.E.F. not re-equipped with the material provided originally for the Finland Force?

I should be very glad if you could let me have the answer as soon as practicable as owing to innumerable engagements I find it very hard to find an opportunity except at the week-end to prepare my speech.

I

The Rt. Hon. Oliver Stanley, M.C., M.P.

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I expect the Prime Minister will want an answer on
the same point, and I may have others to put to you.

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SECRET.

6 May 1940.

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Dear Harry.

I enclose a complete report on the operations in Norway from which you will be able to extract enough facts to prepare your speech and answers.

It is true that we knew that the Germans were practising embarkation and disembarkation, but there was nothing to show that landings were to be effected in Norway. I can fairly say that this definite suggestion was never made.

The special equipment for the Finland force was withdrawn when the Russo-Finnish war ended. It was stored conveniently and reissued to the troops which took part in the Norwegian Campaign.

We were not, as you know, specially organised to take part in an opposed landing, nor was it possible to land anything in the way of the desirable scale of artillery M.T., and some other essentials for the troops which did actually land owing to the very indifferent port and dock facilities in Norway. We did our best with the men and material which were immediately available, since no delay to perfect the machine could be incurred.

Mass minister

Rt. Hon. Lord Hankay, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,

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A NOTE ON WAR OFFICE PLANS FOR OPERATIONS IN NORWAY IN APRIL, 1940.

18th December

Our first preparations for action in Norway were initiated by the end of December. Plans were then made to take advantage of any opportunity which the two Scandinavian Powers might give us to co-operate with them in denying the Gällivare iron ore to Germany. The plans comprised an Allied force of a British Infantry Brigade and a Brigade of Chasseurs Alpins to move in through Narvik, small detachments of one or two battalions each to assist the Norwegians at Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim and a much larger force which would have eventually been built up to several Divisions to support the Swedes in the event of German retaliation against them. These plans were completed about 13th February.

With the development of the Russo-Finnish war these plans were extended. The role of the northern forces entering through Narvik then became to establish Allied forces in Northern Finland to support that country against Russia.

18th March

The force we had originally prepared for operations in Scandinavia and Finland consisted of one Regular Division (5th) from France only one brigade of which had actually embarked; two Territorial Divisions (42nd and 44th) at that time due to go to France but still in England; one Regular Brigade (24th) and five Territorial Army Battalions of the 49th Division in England.

At the conclusion of the Finnish war the regular division reverted to the control of the B.E.F., certain anti-aircraft units went to France and the pre-arranged move of the 42nd and 44th Divisions to the B.E.F. commenced. The 24th Brigade and the 49th Division remained in England. All special equipment and clothing was collected and held centrally in depots against its being required at a later date. All units that recently proceeded to Norway were issued with this equipment.

5th April

Concurrently with the Cabinet decision to lay mines in Norwegian territorial waters plans were prepared to move troops to Norway in the event of German aggression in that country.

These plans were made on the basis that no move from a British port was to take place until Germany had either violated Norwegian territorial integrity or showed unmistakably her intention of so doing. The plans were completed and the troops actually embarked by the 5th April.

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The intention was to despatch in cruisers -

Two Territorial Army Bns.	to Stavanger.
Two " "	to Bergen.
One " "	to Trondheim.

Troops destined for Stavanger would proceed to Bergen if the Germans got there first and those for Bergen to Trondheim if the Germans had reached Bergen first. These battalions were lightly equipped and were to proceed without transport, without artillery and without any heavy military stores. This was necessary as, in order to get them over quickly, they had to be transported in cruisers in which it was impossible to take more than a very reduced scale of baggage and certainly no transport. Their role was simply to forestall the Germans and not in any sense to carry out offensive operations from these places. Norwegian acquiescence and indeed close co-operation was naturally expected.

At the same time a force of one brigade group was to be despatched to Narvik. The role of this force was to secure the port of Narvik and the rail communications from it as far as the Swedish frontier. The force was to be prepared to advance into Sweden should Germany violate Sweden or should the Swedes call for help. Their role then would have been to secure the Gallivare ore fields.

7th April

On the 7th April the news of the German fleet movements in the North Sea resulted in the Battle Fleet and the Second Cruiser Squadron putting to sea. These were followed on the 8th April by the First Cruiser Squadron. The troops which had been embarked in cruisers were hurriedly disembarked and put into camp and those in transports and the further echelons that were about to embark were left without escorts. Any action by land forces in Norway was thus impossible until the return of the Fleet and until the Naval position in the North Sea was clarified. This unexpected abandonment of a pre-arranged plan cost us delay which resulted in the Germans being able to forestall us at Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik.

9th April

The Germans occupied these places on 9th April. Had our troops sailed in accordance with the pre-arranged plan there is every reason to believe that they would have been able to effect a landing anyhow at Trondheim, if not at the other ports. An appreciation of the situation by the Chiefs of Staff resulted in their coming to the conclusion that the recapture of Narvik and the ejection of the Germans from the Trondheim area were necessary. The former operation having the same object as before, the latter having the military objective of securing a base and port suitable for such further operations as we might deem it desirable to undertake in assisting the Norwegians to resist German aggression.

12th April

At first only one of these plans was adopted, i.e., operations to recapture Narvik; and so, on the 12th April this force, which by now had been moved to Scapa, proceeded to that place. These troops were placed under the command of General

/Mackesy

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Mackesy and in addition to his regular (24) brigade he was given the 146 Inf. Bde. (Brigadier Phillips) and informed that his force would be followed by a brigade of Chasseurs Alpins. The plan was to effect a landing at Harstad north of Narvik, there to gain contact with such Norwegian troops as were still fighting and to develop operations southwards for the capture of the town of Narvik itself and the railway to the Swedish frontier.

Operations against Trondheim were not at the moment considered feasible as the only troops left were two battalions of 148 Bde. (Brigadier Morgan). The success of the Naval attack on Narvik and the importance of developing some force against Trondheim led the Chiefs of Staff to decide on diverting the 146 Bde. whilst at sea, from General Mackesy's force to the Trondheim area.

This diversion was possible because this brigade and its vehicles with adequate stores for 30 days at least had been embarked in separate ships, the possibility of such a diversion having been foreseen.

It was obvious that a direct attack on Trondheim could not be staged at short notice and that such an attack would have to be carried out by the very best of troops available. This postulated the withdrawal of a regular brigade at least from France, which could not be done in under a certain time.

Our information showed us that the Germans had not yet occupied the fjord and port of Namsos. Neither had they reached or occupied Andalsnes. It was clear that it would be a race for one or either of these places and that we could not afford to wait for the regular brigade from France and so must be prepared to run the risk of landing lightly equipped troops, without guns or tanks, in order to forestall the Germans and form a bridgehead behind which these and subsequent forces could be disembarked.

14th April

The diversion of the 146 Bde. to which I have referred took place on 14th April and the successful landings were made on the nights of 16th/17th April and 17th/18th April. This operation was achieved without casualty the troops being disembarked from men of war to which they had been transferred some distance from the fjords at Namsos. The Chasseurs Alpins were directed on Namsos now instead of Narvik and their disembarkation commenced some three days later. With the Chasseurs Alpins were field guns and anti-aircraft artillery. The 146 Bde. transport was successfully disembarked on 22nd April.

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Page 3.

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In the meantime for the direct attack on Trondheim a regular brigade was brought from France with 1,000 specially selected Canadian troops and a Territorial infantry brigade in reserve, all of which were embarked in ships of war.

The intention was that General Carton de Wiart in command of the force at Namsos should attack the Germans from the north with the object of drawing their troops northwards from the Trondheim area. At the same time naval landings and army landings at Alesund and Andalsnes were to draw the Germans attention to the south. To this end the 148 Brigade (Brigadier Morgan) which consisted of two battalions with light anti-aircraft artillery was embarked in ships of war and despatched to Andalsnes. These troops were successfully disembarked on 18th April. The remainder of the brigade and its transport followed immediately. Unfortunately the ship conveying the unit's armoured carriers and first line transport with additional anti-aircraft guns was torpedoed and sunk.

18th April

By arrangement with the Royal Navy the disembarkation at both Namsos and Andalsnes were covered by anti-aircraft cruisers and, as soon as they could be made available (24th April) additional air defence was given by fighter aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm operating to aircraft carriers.

All initial landings had been carried out from ships of war under cover of naval anti-aircraft cruiser protection.

19th April

Plans for the direct attack on Trondheim were complete on April 15th and the expedition was to have sailed on April 20th. On 19th April, however, having reconsidered all the implications of this operation, the Chiefs came to the conclusion that it should be abandoned.

21st April

Brigadier Morgan's force which was now operating south of Dombas was immediately reinforced by the 15th (Regular) Brigade. This brigade was landed on 21st April.

Andalsnes was now provided with twelve light anti-aircraft guns and a battery of heavy anti-aircraft artillery was embarked and put to sea. This battery was landed on 27th April.

The scale of German air attack on both Andalsnes and Namsos was heavy and though the temporary expedient of placing A.A. cruisers undoubtedly enabled us to achieve such successes as we had, it was apparent that unless some degree of air superiority could be obtained the chances of landing heavy stores, artillery and further anti-aircraft guns was likely to be most hazardous. At this time also reports from

/Brigadier

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Brigadier Hogg, who had been sent to command the L. of C. by General Massy now in command of these operations, showed clearly the difficulties that would confront us if we persisted in pouring more troops and material through what was inevitably a very vulnerable bottle-neck. An attempt was made to achieve a certain degree of air superiority by flying a squadron of Gladiators to operate from a frozen lake. This operation, too, was frustrated from lack of anti-aircraft artillery defence.

26th April

On 26th April a decision was made to withdraw our forces from Central Norway.

By their action the Germans secured most of the ports with anything like reasonable dock facilities. The rapid discharging of ships filled with heavy military stores, particularly heavy anti-aircraft guns, required much more adequate facilities than exist in such small ports as Namsos and Andalsnes. We were thus put at a disadvantage the extent of which only experience could show. We hoped that A.A. cruisers, the Fleet Air Arm, light anti-aircraft artillery and the action of the Royal Air Force in bombing German aerodromes in south Norway would enable us to secure sufficient a foothold to develop facilities at these ports which the disembarkation of a modern army demands.

Territorial Army battalions were used and so far as the scanty information which we have as yet received can show they thoroughly justified their employment. They were in each case rapidly backed by either regular British or French troops. As has been shown they were initially employed because they were the first troops available. They were adequately equipped for withstanding the rigorous climatic conditions they had to face and were only landed in advance of their transport because the situation demanded rapid action and to have to delay their arrival until that of the slow types of ships that require to be used for the carriage of mechanical vehicles was obviously undesirable.

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SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN SCANDINAVIA.

~~SECRET~~

22ND DECEMBER, 1939.

The project of stopping the ore traffic from Narvik to Germany first came under active discussion when the First Lord of the Admiralty put forward a proposal (W.P.(39) 162) to the War Cabinet that naval action should take place in Norwegian territorial waters. At the same time, the more important project of stopping the whole of the exports of iron ore from Northern Sweden to Germany was also examined. The Russo-Finnish war offered a pretext for sending forces through Norway and Sweden to the assistance of Finland, and thus getting into position to control the orefields.

The implications of these projects were fully examined by the Chiefs of Staff. In W.P.(39) 169, they pointed out that action in Norwegian territorial waters might be met by a German invasion of Southern Norway, which we would be unable to prevent, and the strategic consequences of which would be unfortunate. It would be necessary, therefore, for us to prepare forces to seize

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Narvik, Trondhjem, Bergen, and Stavanger, so as to limit the German control of the Norwegian coast.

12TH JANUARY, 1940.

After considerable discussion, and after a preliminary approach to the Norwegian and Swedish Governments, it was decided not to proceed with action inside Norwegian territorial waters (W.M.(40) 10th Conclusions, Minute 1).

7TH FEBRUARY, 1940.

As a result of discussions with the French at a meeting of the Supreme War Council on 5th February, 1940, preparations were put in hand for the despatch of a force to the assistance of Finland - the leading troops of the force to be ready to land in Norway on 20th March. It was fully realised that the arrival of this force in Scandinavia might involve Sweden and Norway in war with Germany. Consequently, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Chiefs of Staff in W.P.(39) 179, the following forces were got ready:-

- (a) A force consisting of one British Brigade and two Demi-Brigades of Chasseurs Alpins to land at Narvik, and pass through to the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, in preparation for operations in Finland.
- (b) Forces to occupy Norwegian ports, and deny them to the Germans, as follows:-

Trondhjem - 1 battalion.
Bergen - 2 battalions.
Stavanger - 2 battalions.

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(e) A force of about 3 Divisions and
5 Squadrons R.A.F. to pass through
to the assistance of the Swedes.

14TH MARCH. 1940.

Just as all preparations were complete for the despatch of the above forces, the Finnish resistance collapsed, and the pretext was thus removed. The War Cabinet authorised the dispersal of the forces to take place as soon as the ratification of peace terms was assured (W.M.(40) 68th Conclusions, Minute 4). This decision became effective the same evening, and the expedition was broken up.

25TH MARCH. 1940.

As a result of a meeting of the Supreme War Council on 28th March, the original proposal for the stoppage of traffic from Narvik by the laying of a minefield once more came to the fore, and a decision in favour of action was taken.

31ST MARCH. 1940.

The Chiefs of Staff re-examined possible German reactions to the laying of the minefield, and recommended that the following forces should be made ready as a precautionary measure:-

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| (a) <u>For Narvik</u> | - | 1 British Brigade and
a French Contingent. |
| (b) <u>For Trondhjem</u> | - | 1 British Battalion. |
| (c) <u>For Bergen</u> | - | 2 British Battalions. |
| (d) <u>For Stavanger</u> | - | 2 British Battalions. |

These forces were to be ready to sail when the minefield was laid, so that if the Germans

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moved to invade Norway we could forestall them at the West coast ports.

1ST APRIL, 1940.

The War Cabinet approved the preparation of the above forces (W.M.(40)78th Conclusions, Minute 4).

WEDNESDAY

3RD APRIL.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40)80, Minute 5) took the final decision to proceed with the laying of mine-fields in Norwegian territorial waters on April 8th. They were informed of reports that German troops and shipping were assembled at Baltic ports, apparently in readiness for action in Scandinavia. They thought, however, that our mine-laying operation was not likely to lead the Germans to carry out an invasion.

THURSDAY

4TH APRIL.

*When war to be
declared?*

In accordance with the decision of the previous day to proceed with the mine-laying operation, telegrams were sent to the British Ministers at Oslo and Stockholm containing notes for the Swedish and Norwegian Governments to be held in suspense for the time being.

In the evening the Chiefs of Staff circulated two Reports: W.P.(40) 117 recommended that, as a decision might be very urgently needed in the event of enemy action against Scandinavia, the Admiralty, as the predominant partner, should be authorised to order the despatch of the forces organised for our expeditions to the Norwegian ports without waiting for the authority of the War Cabinet. There would always be time for consideration by the War Cabinet before the expeditions actually reached Norwegian ports.

W.P.(40) 118 recommended that, as it was now unlikely that Germany would invade Sweden, the large forces previously earmarked for action in Southern Sweden should no longer be maintained in readiness at the expense of the despatch of troops to the B.E.F. base, etc; preparations should, however, continue for a force of two divisions to be assembled if necessary;

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TUESDAY
1 MAY
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by withdrawals from France. Three battalions should remain earmarked for Narvik and five battalions for the Southern Norwegian ports, and the remainder of the 49th Division should be mobilised and held in readiness to reinforce any of these as might be required.

FRIDAY
4 MAY
1940

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 83, Minute 6) approved the proposals of the Chiefs of Staff (W.P.(40) 117 and 118). The instructions for the commanders of the forces concerned were to be submitted for approval the next day.

SATURDAY
5 MAY
1940

The Chiefs of Staff submitted to the War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 83, Minute 6) a Note (W.P.(40)122) setting out instructions for the forces to be sent to Norwegian ports in the event of German aggression on Southern Norway or Sweden. It was assumed that the forces would be landed with the general co-operation of the Norwegian Government, though they might have to deal with minor local opposition. The function of the Narvik force was to secure that port and the communications with the ore fields; it should not enter Sweden without further orders. The Forces for the other ports had the task of forestalling the Germans and denying them the use of the ports and air facilities at Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim. At Stavanger the operations was in the nature of a raid as it might not be possible to hold this port against German attack. These instructions (and also instructions for naval commanders, circulated at the meeting) were approved with minor amendments.

SUNDAY
6 MAY
1940

During the morning, air reconnaissances reported a German force of one cruiser and six destroyers steaming north-west of Horn's Reef. A bomber force sent out as a result of this report did not locate that force but intercepted another consisting of one battle-cruiser, two small and one large cruiser, and fourteen destroyers 76 miles N.E.W. of Horn's Reef, which they attacked

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

SUNDAY
~~27 APRIL~~

unsuccessfully.

102

In the evening, the main battle fleet and the second cruiser squadron sailed from Scapa and Rosyth respectively in the hope of engaging the German fleet off the Norwegian coast.

MONDAY
~~28 APRIL~~

The War Cabinet (W.M. (40) 84) were informed of the events of the previous day, and of the movements of the fleet. They were also informed that the first cruiser squadron which had been taking on troops at Rosyth for the possible operation of occupying Norwegian ports, had disembarked the troops and explosives and would be sailing shortly without them. It seemed possible though unlikely that the intention of the German force was to seize Narvik. The minefield in the Vest Fjord had been laid in the early hours, but the force for the southern minefield had been ordered back until the naval situation could be cleared up. It seemed likely that the German fleet would meet the force covering the mine-laying and that an engagement would ensue. It was decided to pass on to the Norwegian Navy our information as to German naval movements.

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

Tuesday, 9th April.

Messages were received during the early hours that German land forces were entering Denmark, and that naval forces were approaching Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondhjem. The Chiefs of Staff met at 6.0 a.m. and prepared proposals to put before a meeting of the War Cabinet summoned for 8.30 a.m. By that time it was known that the Germans had occupied the port of Bergen at 6.0 a.m. and during the meeting it was reported that air attacks were taking place near Oslo and that German troops had landed at Egersund. There were also received the terms of the German declaration that they had taken Denmark and Norway under their protection to prevent possible hostile attacks. All important points in Denmark were occupied by the Germans in a few hours. British submarines had sunk a German cruiser, a transport and a tanker off the south coast of Norway.

At this meeting (W.M.(40) 85) they authorised the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet to take all possible steps to clear Bergen and Trondhjem of enemy forces, and ordered preparations to be made for military expeditions to recapture these two ports and to occupy Narvik, but these expeditions were not to move until the naval situation had been cleared up. The French were to be invited to prepare the force of Chasseurs Alpins originally destined for Narvik to be embarked as soon as possible with a view to their participating in the recapture of Bergen and Trondhjem. The Norwegian Government were to be

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

Tuesday, 9th April.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

Tuesday, 9th April.
(CONT'D.)

informed that we would take all possible steps to support them against the Germans and in particular that we should take immediate action to drive the Germans out of Bergen and Trondhjem.

When the Chiefs of Staff met again at 11.0 a.m. reports showed that the Germans had probably reached Narvik as well as the other Norwegian ports. There were eight British battalions in the United Kingdom available for early operations in Norway, of which one was completely ready while the remaining seven could probably be ready to sail from the Clyde on the evening of April 12th. Four of these would require re-equipping as their equipment was still on board the cruisers from which troops had been hurriedly disembarked on the previous day. The base and lines of communication organisation for the "Plymouth" force was being proceeded with and the advance forces of this organisation might be ready by April 21st.

The first step was to find out more about the position in Norway by naval and air reconnaissances, but they recommended that the leading battalions should be sailed for Scapa at once and the remaining seven battalions made ready to sail as quickly as possible, the decision as to their destinations depending upon the development of the situation. From the military point of view the recapture of Trondhjem and Bergen was of greater importance than Narvik, though it would not be possible to permit Narvik to remain in the hands of the enemy.

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103
TUESDAY, 9th April.

(CONT'D).

The War Cabinet met again at 12.0 noon (W.M.(40) 86). They were told that the Danish Government had come to terms with the Germans, but that the Norwegian Government was so far resisting.

They took note of the proposals of the Chiefs of Staff and were informed by the First Lord of the Admiralty that the first problem was to deal with the two German battle-cruisers. They approved instructions to our submarine commanders to attack, without warning, all shipping in the Skagerrak.

At the meeting of the Supreme War Council at 4.15 p.m. the French stressed the importance of not losing sight of the central Allied aim of cutting off Germany's supplies of iron ore from Scandinavia. It was still not certain at this time whether the Germans had actually seized Narvik, and it was thought that even if reports to this effect were true they would have very small forces there and that they could be ejected without great difficulty. There was some discussion as to the extent to which troops should be used for operations at Narvik as against Trondheim and Bergen but nothing definite could be said on this question in the absence of accurate information as to the German forces at each of the ports. It was agreed that strong forces should be sent to ports on the Norwegian seaboard and that in determining the forces to be sent to each the particular importance of securing Narvik should be borne in mind. No forces should be despatched until the naval

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TUESDAY, 9th April.
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situation had been cleared up. (This had special reference to the two German battle-cruisers operating off the Norwegian coast).

The Norwegian Government should be told of the operations already undertaken by the British Navy and Air Force and that further forces were rapidly being prepared to help them, but it was not possible to meet their request for direct air assistance in the absence of suitable aerodromes. The French were informed of the British battalions available for embarkation at an early date and explained that the Alpine division of some 15,000 men prepared for the Narvik expedition which had previously been contemplated was moving to Brest and would be ready to embark in about 40 hours.

The Meeting discussed not only the Scandinavian situation but also the action to be taken with the Belgian Government in the light of an expected early German attack in the West and ~~with~~ preparations for a naval concentration in the Eastern Mediterranean in the event of Italian mobilisation.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 9.30 p.m. with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair. According to reports now available it

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(10)

Tuesday, 9th April
(CONT'D.)

appeared that Narvik was held by six German destroyers and one submarine and possibly by 3,000-4,000 troops. Orders had already been issued for a destroyer flotilla to move in on the following morning to attack the German destroyers and transports. As regards the other ports, no definite information was available but it was at least probable that the Germans had taken possession of some of the Norwegian shore batteries at Bergen. In the circumstances it was thought that the opposition would be too great for destroyers to take on alone, and the operation against Bergen was to be carried out by torpedo-carrying aircraft.

As regards further action, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that with the forces available (three fully-trained battalions, about 13,000 lesser-trained troops and a brigade of Chasseurs Alpins) it was not possible to attempt to dislodge the Germans from more than one point on the Norwegian coast. He therefore urged that we should concentrate our attack on recapturing Narvik. The time limit for this depended on the unfreezing of the Gulf of Bothnia, i.e. we had about a month, but he guaranteed that the operation would be planned with a view to its execution at the earliest possible moment. There was general agreement with this view and the Chiefs of Staff were asked to prepare a plan for the despatch of an Allied force to recapture Narvik and mask other points in German occupation on the Norwegian coast, taking into consideration the possibility of establishing a foothold at Namsos and Andalsnes.

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Wednesday, April 10th.

The morning report stated that Oslo had ¹⁰⁶ capitulated on the previous afternoon and that the Norwegian Government was at Hamar. Nothing definite was known of the Norwegian Army's operations. Our aircraft had attacked German cruisers at Bergen and secured one direct hit.

Wednesday, April 10th.

At a meeting at 10.0 a.m. the Chiefs of Staff gave instructions for the preparation of plans for the capture of Narvik. If it was found that the whole of the Allied forces available were not required for this operation, consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a foothold on other points not yet in German occupation, e.g. at Namsos and Andalsnes.

By the time the War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 87) met at 11.30 a.m. reports were not yet available of the RENOWN'S engagement with two enemy vessels on the previous morning, but it was known that the attack carried out by five destroyers on Narvik at dawn that morning had resulted in the loss of two of them. The War Cabinet were also told of reports that the Norwegian Government might be opening negotiations with the Germans. They were informed that at the meeting of the Supreme War Council on the previous day, the French had emphasised the vital importance of securing Narvik and they confirmed the recommendation of the Military Co-ordination Committee that Narvik should be recaptured at all costs, and that preparations for this should not be interfered with by the possibility of a German offensive in the West.

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Wednesday, 10th April.
(CONT'D.)

The Navy would in the meantime block communications with the other ports and submarines would continue operating off the ports of Southern Norway and in the Kattegat and Skagerrak. The War Cabinet authorised the Royal Air Force to attack any vessels found in the Skagerrak.

During the afternoon it became known that our destroyers had inflicted considerable damage on the enemy at Narvik in the action that morning. One enemy destroyer had been sunk, three set on fire and a German ammunition ship had been sunk. The strength of the German force in Narvik was now estimated at from 1,000 - 3,000 men.

At 5.0 p.m. the Military Co-ordination Committee, the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair, Admiral Lord Cork being present, discussed plans for the capture of Narvik (operation "Rupert"). The object in seizing Narvik was to establish a naval base for ourselves and also to use it as a base from which to reach out to the ore fields. It was agreed that two battalions at Scapa should be despatched as quickly as possible to form an advance base, the location of this to be decided by the Naval Staff and General Staff in consultation.

Thursday, 11th April.

No reports of military operations in Norway were available. There had been a number of enemy air attacks on our fleet, but the only serious result was the sinking of one destroyer. We had sunk or captured two enemy transports near Narvik and our submarines were active off the Skaw.

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Thursday, 11th April.
(CONT'D.)

The Chief of Staff, meeting at 9.0 a.m., were informed that General Mackesy, who was to be in military command of the Narvik operations, was to sail with one company of infantry that day and should arrive near their destination on April 13th. Four battalions would sail on the 12th to arrive on the 14th or 15th. Another four battalions a few days later, to be followed by the rest of the 49th Division. The first echelon of the French brigade was ready to sail from France and the remainder was due to arrive between the 21st and 25th of April.

During the night telegrams had been received suggesting that the Swedish Government was already under pressure from the Germans to grant them transit etc. facilities, and also one from Paris reporting that the French Government was sending a mission to Sweden. The two members of this mission travelled via London; and at 9.30 a.m., with the French Ambassador, they met the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the three Service Ministers. It was agreed that Admiral Sir Edward Evans and Major-General Lewin should join the mission as British representatives. They were not to offer Sweden any great promises of help, but were to do their best to encourage the Swedes to resist German aggression and to point out to them the importance of protecting the ore-fields and their railways.

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Replies
Thursday, 11th
April (CONT'D).

This mission and its instructions were discussed at the War Cabinet meeting at 11.0 o'clock (W.M.) (40) 48.

The First Lord of the Admiralty informed the War Cabinet of an action of 9th April between H.M.S. RENOWN and a German vessel, probably the Scharnhorst, in which the latter had been hit. The RENOWN had suffered no serious damage. There was no further news of the Narvik operations. Our submarines had sunk several more German transports; others had been sunk by our destroyers and by Norwegian vessels.

After telegram No. 187 from the British Minister at Stockholm had reported that the Norwegian Government was negotiating with the Germans, a later telegram No. 194 reported that the Norwegian Government had given instructions for military co-operation with the Allies.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 6.30 p.m. under the First Lord of the Admiralty, took note of the outlined plan which was being put into execution for the Narvik operation ("Rupert") and agreed that if possible naval and air operations to harass the Germans in Narvik should be undertaken before the landing of the military forces. They agreed that it was most important to continue harassing attacks from the air on Stavanger aerodrome so far as this was possible without undue dissipation of our Air Striking Force. They discussed the possibility, if the operation "Rupert" were brought to a successful conclusion, of following it up with an operation against either Trondhjem or Bergen. It was pointed out that the recapture of Trondhjem would be a difficult operation, but they agreed that the study of this operation (to be termed "Maurice") should be undertaken but that no actual preparations should begin until it was known what would be involved in operation "Rupert".

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Friday, April 12th.

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The reports available in the morning stated that the Norwegian Army was established in a line near Elverum. A mixed brigade was reported to be 40 miles north-east of Narvik. The aerodrome at Stavanger had been attacked, but reports were not yet available.

Mar 13

An unofficial report had been received 12th that Admiral Siles had been seen damaged. A report from 12th submarine 1st-cmdt at the "Hark" has not received till 12th following day.

The War Cabinet at their morning meeting (W.M. (40) 89) were told that we were getting near locating all the German big ships so that our naval forces could operate more freely. A telegram had been received from the British Minister at Stockholm urging strongly that the first allied effort should be the recapture of Trondhjem not Narvik.

They were told that Lord Cork and General Mackesy were sailing that day for the Narvik area. The four battalions to form the first part of the forces to land would follow closely. There was some discussion of the importance of the recapture of Trondhjem, but the First Lord of the Admiralty pointed out that this would be a very difficult operation. It was agreed that it would, in any case, be desirable to secure a footing at Namsos if possible.

Twelfth

At a second meeting of the War Cabinet in the afternoon (W.M. (40) 90) called primarily for other matters, their attention was drawn to messages from the British Minister in Norway stressing the desirability of early military operations in southern Norway. The difficulties of an opposed landing at Trondhjem

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were

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were again pointed out and it was explained that plans for an operation in this region were being examined, also proposals for minor landings at Namsos and Molde. It was generally agreed that landings even on a small scale would have an important political effect, but that they should not be carried out at the cost of a diversion of effort from the Narvik expedition.

The Military Co-ordination Committee meeting at 5.30 p.m., with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair agreed that there should be no interference with the integrity of the arrangements already decided upon for the Narvik operation. (Rupert). They also agreed that plans should be made forthwith for the landing of such forces as could immediately be made available at selected points on the coast under operation "Maurice" (for an attack on Trondhjem), and that a directive for this operation should be discussed later that evening between the Chairman, Secretary of State for War, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Saturday, April 13th.

The reports available in the morning suggested that the Norwegians had evacuated Elverum and that an engagement at Eldavold was likely. Swedish mobilisation was proceeding. Aircraft from H.M.S. Furious had damaged two destroyers at Narvik.

A telegram was received from the Allied Mission to Sweden emphasising the vital importance of early operations to re-capture Trondhjem. The Chiefs of Staff, meeting in the morning, had their attention drawn to this telegram, but in

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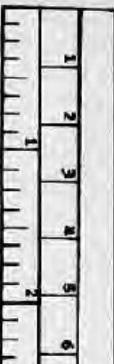
Saturday,
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(CONT'D.)

discussing it took the line that it had been definitely decided that the integrity of the Narvik operation "Rupert" should not be compromised by other operations elsewhere. In any case, the only part of the Narvik Expedition which could be diverted elsewhere as a self-contained group would be the French contingent.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 91) considered the various arguments advanced for treating the capture of Trondhjem as the first Allied objective. The First Lord of the Admiralty was anxious not to weaken our preparations for taking Narvik, but other members of the Cabinet were very much impressed with the arguments for the importance of Trondhjem and it was suggested that we should obtain permission from the French to use the Chasseurs Alpins elsewhere than at Narvik, if necessary. It was explained that an attempt was being made to occupy Narvik at once by a coup de main, that a small naval landing at Namsos was planned for that same evening, and that the Military Co-ordination Committee was proposing to consider that evening where the first British Battalions for the Trondhjem area should be landed. In view of all these considerations, it was eventually agreed to tell the Swedish and Norwegian Governments that we intended to re-capture both Narvik and Trondhjem, to inform the French accordingly, and to ask them to give us liberty to use the force of Chasseurs Alpins elsewhere than at Narvik.

In the afternoon, a telegram was received from Paris to the effect that the French War Committee now concluded that Trondhjem was the vital point.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair, at 8.0 p.m., were informed of a telegram offering further French forces, provided that we could supply their transport. They approved instructions for the Commander of force "Maurice" for the Trondhjem area and considered the



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preparation of reinforcements for the 5 Battalions which were to be landed for this operation. They decided to stop the movement to France of the 127th Infantry Brigade, but thought no preparations should yet be made for the withdrawal of regular troops from France.

It became known during the afternoon that at about midday H.M.S. WARSPITE and nine destroyers had sunk or completely disabled seven enemy destroyers in Narvik Bay and the fjord behind it and had occupied Narvik harbour. Three of our destroyers had been damaged.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met again at 10.30 p.m. with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the Chair, to review the situation in the light of the destruction of the German naval forces at Narvik. The situation in Narvik town was not yet clear but it seemed possible that our forces might be able to land in the town itself and it was agreed that if the information, in the opinion of the First Lord of the Admiralty, justified the assumption that the town could be occupied without serious opposition, arrangements should be made for diverting the second Brigade of the Narvik force to Namsos. General Carton de Wiart could fly to Namsos to meet this Brigade and give its Commander revised instructions, and the same aircraft could convey the new set of maps that they would require.

In view of the altered situation and the latest information received from the Trondhjem area, it was decided to ask the Service Staffs to study at once the implications of a direct landing of part of the force "Maurice" at Trondhjem, instead of its all going to Namsos in the first instance.

*Norval
Atwell*

The morning report gave no definite news of German movements in Norway. Their forces in that country were estimated at roughly three divisions, including 15,000 troops in the Oslo area.



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Sunday,
16th April.

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The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.30 a.m., considered details of questions involved in the diversion of Phillips' Brigade to Namsos, if it were decided on.

The War Cabinet were informed that if the exact position at Narvik was not yet known, our naval success there at any rate made it possible to take a more hopeful view of the possibility of operations in the Trondhjem area. We could probably make available for these operations, in addition to the forces already designated for them, the ~~2nd~~^{Second} Brigade ~~and~~ the Narvik contingent and the Chasseurs Alpins destined for Narvik. Naval landings were being carried out at a number of points in the Trondhjem region to divert the attention of the Germans. It was also suggested that a direct land attack on Trondhjem might very well not involve unjustifiable risks. The War Cabinet took note of this discussion but gave no decisions.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 2.30, decided (P.W.M.) on the diversion of the 146th Brigade from Narvik to the Namsos area. The Navy were landing 300 men there that same night and the exact arrangements for landing the 146th Brigade would depend on the results of this landing. The aerodrome at Stavanger was to be attacked that night and the following night, and if possible on the following night the Trondhjem aerodrome also. Morgan's Brigade would arrive in the Trondhjem-Namsos area on April 17th.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair, met at 4.30 and had before them a telegram from Admiral Whitworth saying that he was convinced that Narvik could be taken by direct assault. They were informed

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Sunday, April 14th.
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of the steps taken by the Chiefs of Staff and that the 1146th Brigade would be beginning its landing at Namsos, all being well, at dusk on April 15th. 600 marines and sailors in four sloops would be landing at Aalesund in the early hours of April 17th.

Monday, April 15th.

The morning report showed that our first troops had been landed in the Narvik area at Sag Fiord and had established contact with the Norwegian troops and also with the enemy. The naval landing of 300 men at Namsos had been successfully carried out. In Trondhjem the Germans were reported to have strengthened their defences with heavy artillery. Germans movements were not clear but their main force seemed to be on the railways from Oslo to Sweden to Hamar and to Bergen.

Aircraft had carried out attacks on Stavanger aerodrome and seaplanes in the fiord nearby apparently with some success, and had also been engaged on mine-laying in the Great Belt.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.30 a.m., decided that in view of the air danger it would not be desirable to land the troops at Namsos as originally planned. The transports should go to Lillegron and the troops conveyed thence to Namsos by destroyers. The naval force for landing at Aalesund was diverted to Andalanes. Morgan's Brigade and the French contingent were to be held up until the situation at Namsos became clearer. If the Narvik situation could be cleared up, it was hoped to use the Guards' Brigade from there for ~~an~~ ^{a direct attack on} Trondhjem and also to use Harstad, near Narvik, as an advanced base for ~~an~~ ^{another} ~~attack on~~ Trondhjem. Such an attack.

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Monday, April 15th.
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The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 93) were given the above information and were told also that the Norwegians reported that the Germans had gained control of the west battery at the entrance to Trondhjem fiord. The Norwegians were in occupation of Stenkjeer (between Trondhjem and Namsos) the defences of Narvik were stiffening and it was now clear that we could not count on taking it without resistance. The First Lord of the Admiralty reported the diversion of the 146th Brigade to the Namsos area but explained that the snow conditions, lack of concealment from the air, etc. would make it very difficult to land a considerable force there and that the whole operation would be very hazardous. One battalion was to be landed in the first instance and other landing places were being looked for. He explained also that the Commander-in-Chief had not been very keen on forcing his way into Trondhjem because of the risk of air attack. The War Cabinet reaffirmed the importance which they attached to the occupation of Trondhjem at the earliest possible moment, and some disappointment was expressed ~~when~~ ^{that} it had been found necessary to delay our landings in the Trondhjem area; but they endorsed the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff to restrict further landings at Namsos to one battalion until the situation should become clearer.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 5.30 p.m. under the First Lord of the Admiralty, were told that the naval force for Andalsnes had not yet left on account of bad weather.

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Monday, April 15th.
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The French contingent was being detained in the Clyde and the 148th Brigade was still at Rosyth. The implications of a direct attack on Trondhjem were being examined, but it was in any case important to keep up activity by forces landed elsewhere in the area. They asked for an examination to be made of the possibility of making further land forces available for operations in Norway. They were told ^{that} the Allied Mission to Sweden, which had now returned, had again emphasised the importance of recapturing Trondhjem as early as possible.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 6.45 p.m. considered the pros and cons ~~for~~ ^{of} a direct attack on Trondhjem as against ~~antined assault~~ ^{attempt to} ~~and~~ ^{attack} on it by exploiting the situation from Namsos and Andalsnes. Also the difficulties of using Trondhjem if it could be secured, in view of the air attack to which it would be subjected. They approved in principle the conception of assaulting it from south and north and also of a direct attack, timed to take advantage of these operations, and instructed that plans and preparations for a direct attack should be put in hand forthwith.

Tuesday, April 16th.

The morning report estimated the number of German troops in Norway at 57,000. They were said to be operating on a line from near Elverum to Frederikstad. In the Trondhjem area the Norwegians held Namsos and Stenkjeer. General Carton de Wiart had arrived at Namsos by flying-boat.

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The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.45 a.m.,
discussed plans for the Trondhjem operation.

The War Cabinet, at a short meeting at
11.30 a.m. (W.M.(40) 94) were given the above information
and told also that the forts guarding the
entrance to Trondhjem harbour were in German hands
but extremely vulnerable to air attack. They
decided to send Sir Edward Evans to Norway to main-
tain contact with the King.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met
~~10.50 a.m.~~ at 12.30 p.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair.
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained
the plan of operations which had been adopted and
the instructions given to Carton de Wiart to
"exploit from Namsos". He had said that he did
not require Morgan's Brigade, which was thus avail-
able for reinforcing Andalsnes. It was necessary
at this stage to treat the forces at Namsos and
at Andalsnes and those intended for direct attack
as constituting separate commands. Operations from
Namsos could begin on April 21st but these operations
and those based on Andalsnes were related to the
main operation and careful timing was needed. Plans
were still being considered for the main operation
on Trondhjem. (The Prime Minister emphasised the
need for the least possible delay). This required
troops of the first quality and there were available
only two battalions of Guards and two battalions
of the Foreign Legion. A demi-brigade of Chasseurs
Alpins were available for a reserve but it would be
wasteful to use these for the direct attack. It
therefore seemed necessary to use a regular British
brigade from France.

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Tuesday, April 16th.

(CONT'D.)

The Committee confirmed the instructions given to General Carton de Wiart and instructed that plans should be prepared on the basis of troops being available as suggested above. The arrival of the battalions of the Foreign Legion should, if possible be expedited and a regular brigade from the 5th Division in France should be withdrawn at once.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 6.30 p.m., considered the possibility of using the first as distinct from the second demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins as a floating reserve for the Trondhjem landing, but were impressed by the objections to this course. The earliest possible date for this operation would be April 22nd but some margin must be allowed for bad weather and it was agreed that April 24th would not be too late. They were informed that the transports with the Namsos force at Lillesjona had been continuously attacked from the air that afternoon.

Wednesday, April 17th.

The morning report stated that in the Trondhjem area the fort at Hegra was still in Norwegian hands but the Germans were said to have landed at Inderoy, north-east of Trondhjem fiord. Parachute troops landing at Dombaae had been put out of action by the Norwegians. A German submarine had been sunk in the Narvik area.

The Chiefs of Staff met at 9.0 a.m. and considered a Note by the First Lord of the Admiralty prepared in view of a telegram which had been received from Lord Cork and General Mackesy, proposing that no attack should be made at Narvik until the snow melted, which might mean the end of the month.

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Wednesday, April 17th.
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They were in agreement with his proposal to send a telegram urging that an early attack should be made on Narvik with the forces already available, i.e. the Guards Brigade. "Send us your appreciation and act at once if you think right".

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 10.0 a.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair and approved the despatch of a telegram as above to General Mackesy and Lord Cork. They decided, in the light of the latest information from Namsos, to divert the convoy carrying the first demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins direct to Namsos in the hope that the troops could land on the nights of April 19th and 20th and could be employed against the Germans north-east of Trondhjem.

They were informed that the troops available for a direct landing at Trondhjem would consist of one regular brigade and two Canadian battalions, with ~~now~~ number of territorial brigades as a floating reserve. The second demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpine would not arrive until 25th April and it was hoped to make use of them for operations from Trondhjem after its occupation.

(W.M.(4)45)

The War Cabinet were informed of the plans for an attack on Trondhjem with the forces indicated above and gave their general approval.

The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 3.15 p.m. discussed with General Hotblack his plans for the Trondhjem landing.

Thursday, April 18th.

The morning report stated that H.M.S. SUFFOLK had bombarded the aerodrome at Stavanger the previous evening but had been seriously damaged by air attack on her return. The unloading of transports at Namsos had begun and the force of marines had landed at Andalanes on the previous

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Thursday, April 18th. afternoon. The military situation in the Oslo
(CONT'D.) area was obscure.

The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 9.0 a.m. had before them a telegram from General Mackesy to the effect that he had been counting on the arrival of the Chasseurs Alpins for operations against Narvik and that without them his force was inferior to the enemy and incapable of operating in mountainous country under conditions of snow. It was decided to recommend the Military Co-ordination Committee to tell him in reply that no more mobile troops could be sent him as they were required for operations elsewhere and that he should act on the telegram sent him on the previous day.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 10.0 a.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair, approved the despatch of a telegram as above to General Mackesy.

They were told that Phillips' Brigade had landed at Namsos without loss; this and the landing of a brigade in the Narvik area also without loss represented an unexpected piece of good-fortune. They were also told of General Carton de Wiart's plan for advancing south by two routes. It was hoped that by April 21st, with the assistance of the French troops, he would be able to exert considerable pressure on the Germans. They were also told of General Hotblack's serious accident, and that on this account and for other reasons it was proposed to postpone the main

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Thursday, April 18th.
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attack on Trondhjem until 24th April. The Committee took note of the position and decided that it would be most undesirable to bombard the town of Trondhjem if it could be avoided.

With reference to appeals from the Norwegians for troops to help them on their southern front, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained that this would not be possible. Morgan's Brigade would be landing on April 18th - 19th and had been ordered to push on to Dombæs.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 96) were informed of the general position and of the state of our plans on the lines indicated above. They were told that it was hoped that the Allied forces in Scandinavia would eventually amount to from 50,000 to 60,000 men, of whom roughly one-half would be French.

Friday, April 19th.

The morning report stated that in the Narvik area the Germans had overcome Norwegian opposition on the railway and reached the Swedish frontier. The landing of the 146th Brigade at Namsos had been completed and the British naval party had landed at Andalsnes and Aalesund. The German force in the Trondhjem area had probably increased to some 5,000 men by means of air landings. They were operating aircraft from a frozen lake near Trondhjem.

Norwegian headquarters reported their position in the neighbourhood of Hamar and Gjelvik on the main routes north from Oslo.

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Friday, April 19th.
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The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 8.30 a.m., considered the proposal that a small force should be pushed forward to reinforce the Norwegians on the southern front and decided to advise against this course until Dombaas could be secured. Two cavalry regiments on an improvised mechanised basis were being organised for Norway.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 10.0 a.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair, were told that the stores of Phillips' Brigade had been successfully landed at Namsos. He had pushed a detachment forward to west of Stenkjeer.

Two battalions of Morgan's Brigade had landed at Andalsnes and it was hoped that he could reach Dombaas by April 21st. The Committee accepted the advice of the Chiefs of Staff as regards the despatch of a small force to support the Norwegians in the south and endorsed the instructions given to Brigadier Morgan to occupy Dombaas as rapidly as possible. His main task was to prevent the Germans using the railway to send reinforcements to Trondhjem before himself demonstrating towards that place.

They were informed that Lulea was unlikely to become ice-free until the last week in May.

With reference to the plan put forward by Lord Cork for operations at Narvik, it was noted that these involved the use of H.M.S. WARSPITE, which was required for the attack on Trondhjem.

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Friday, April 19th.
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They took the view that it was not essential to use this vessel at Narvik and that the Trondhjem operation must in any case take precedence.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 97) were informed of the outlined plan prepared for action at Narvik with the forces now available and were told that the main attack on Trondhjem could not now take place until April 25th.

When the Chiefs of Staff met at 2.0 p.m., the Chief of Naval Staff introduced a proposal that in view of the conditions which had developed in the Namsos and Molde areas, it would be more advantageous to exploit the "pincer" movement on Trondhjem to the maximum extent and not to attempt the direct assault into the centre. After a full discussion, in which it was felt that the exploitation of the landings already successfully carried through was a more certain plan than the direct "hammer" attack, it was agreed that subject to the approval of the War Cabinet the plans for the capture of Trondhjem should be altered accordingly, provided the scale of air attack could be competed with. The War Office were asked to examine at once the plan required for the alternative general idea, the military forces needed and where and when they should land and the estimated time before Trondhjem itself would be invested.

In view of this advice from the Chiefs of Staff and in order to stop the loading of ships for the "hammer" operation which it was now proposed to cancel, the First Lord of the Admiralty obtained an immediate decision from the Prime Minister authorising this to be done.

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Friday, April 19th.
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The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 10.0 p.m. with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair, and endorsed these proposals, i.e. the adoption of the "pincer" as distinct from the "hammer" operation. A statement on the revised operation was to be submitted to the War Cabinet at the earliest opportunity. It was appreciated that the Namsos force might have to contend with serious difficulties, but it was thought that these would not be insuperable. The possibility of a naval raid to divert attention from the proposed operations would be investigated. The Canadian troops would no longer be required for operations in the Trondhjem area and it was suggested that they might be diverted to Narvik.

The Committee were informed that Lieut.-General Massy was being appointed to command the forces in Norway other than those operating at Narvik, and that the French were offering additional forces without appreciating the great difficulties of arranging for their reception and subsequent supply with the facilities actually available in Norway.

Saturday, April 20th.

The morning report showed that the first convoy of French troops had been successfully landed at Namsos. The German advance in the Oslo area seemed to be slowing up and Norwegian troops had carried out a controlled withdrawal to north of the Hamar line with few losses. The Norwegian resistance between Bergen and Stavanger seemed to be stiffening.



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Friday, April 19th.
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Saturday, April 20th.
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The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 9.30 a.m., considered the reply to be sent to the French explaining that we could not make use of further forces over and above the Chasseurs Alpins under General Audet until Trondhjem had been captured.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 98), meeting at 10.30 a.m., were informed by the First Lord of the Admiralty of the changes made on the previous day in the plans for the operations against Trondhjem. A direct assault had been felt to involve undue risks both for the Fleet and for our landing parties, and General Massy, who had been given charge of the operation, had taken the view that the stake was disproportionate to the result, particularly as the latter could be obtained by other methods. The new plan was to send the whole of the first division of Chasseurs Alpins for the attack on Trondhjem from the north and to send the regular brigade from France to reinforce the troops who had landed at Andalsnes. Another territorial brigade would also be put in on the southern line and it might be possible for part of this southern force to reinforce the Norwegians on the Oslo front. The Secretary of State for War emphasised that the new plan was little less hazardous than that of direct assault on Trondhjem, as our bases would be subject to very heavy air attack until we had secured Trondhjem aerodrome. The new plan could not quite correctly be described as a "pincer" movement because it would be some time (it might well be a month) before the southern force could ^{move} ~~move~~ against Trondhjem and it would have to make its first care to secure itself against a German attack from the south.

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Saturday, April 20th.
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The First Lord of the Admiralty reported that H.M.S. WARSPITE was returning to the Narvik area in view of this change of plan and that some progress might be expected very soon. It was important to liquidate the position at Narvik and to establish ourselves on the Swedish frontier within a month, i.e. before the German shipping could get up to Lulea.

The War Cabinet took note of this discussion.

Sunday, April 21st.

The morning report told that Namsos had been badly bombed on the previous day and that the town was in flames. The leading British troops based on Namsos were at Verdal.

The Germans were now estimated to have four divisions in Norway and their troops in Trondhjem were said to ^{have been} be reinforced by air and possibly by sea. The Norwegians were continuing to withdraw on the Oslo front after rearguard actions in the Hamar region.

Photographs showed that the aerodrome at Stavanger had been seriously damaged.

The War Cabinet, meeting at 4.30 p.m., were told of the bombing of Namsos. Stores and ammunition had probably been destroyed but the wharf had not been damaged.

As regards the Andalsnes force, Brigadier Morgan had pushed ahead and had joined the Norwegians at Lillehammer with two battalions. A ship with transport for this force had unfortunately been sunk by a submarine.

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Sunday, April 21st.
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Various plans for providing air protection were discussed, including the possibility of operating Gladiators from a frozen lake near Andalsnes. It was recognised that the present position was one of some anxiety and that we had undertaken a very hazardous operation in throwing ashore lightly equipped forces without proper maintenance facilities. There was some discussion as to the disposal of the various reinforcements en route to Norway, but this was left over for further consideration by the Military Co-ordination Committee.

The War Cabinet were informed that in view of an apparent lack of harmony between Admiral Lord Cork and General Mackesy, the former had been appointed to take supreme command of the whole of the Narvik operation. There was a preliminary discussion of the difficulties involved in having to consider the possibility of bombarding Narvik.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 9.30 p.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair, considered the best method for employing the Allied forces in Norway in the light of the latest available information. The suggestion was made that the French might be employed south of Trondhjem and the British north of it, but to this it was objected that the French troops were the more mobile and that some of them were therefore required for the northern operation. It seemed very probable that Narvik could not accommodate any more troops and a message had been received from Carton de Wiart suggesting that it might be necessary to evacuate ^{the} forces that were already there. No firm decisions could be taken

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Sunday, April 21st.
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on the available information and it could only be decided to try to obtain from the French a free hand as to the use to be made of their troops.

Monday, April 22nd.

The morning summary reported that a French transport had arrived safely at Namsos with stores, etc. The Germans were said to have taken Elverum and to be pushing on towards Rena. Further German concentrations at Baltic ports were reported.

Another successful air raid at Stavanger aerodrome had been carried out.

The Chiefs of Staff met at 9.0 a.m. and considered the latest telegrams received from General Carton de Wiart at Namsos. Though they showed no recognition of the fact that it might be necessary to evacuate that base, the Staffs decided that it was advisable to begin to consider what this would involve.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(4⁰) 100) met with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the chair, as the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty were at the meeting of the Supreme War Council in Paris. They were informed of the difficult situation that had arisen at Namsos, and that it might be necessary to evacuate it. No decisions could be taken until the situation became clearer.

They considered further the policy to be adopted in regard to the bombardment of Narvik.

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Monday, 22nd April.
(Continued).

The Supreme War Council met in Paris at 3 p.m., this session being devoted to a discussion of the Scandinavian situation. The British Representatives (the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty) explained the latest developments and in particular the great difficulties which had to be faced in maintaining the bases at Narvik and Andalenes against air attack. We were however still hoping to be able to reinforce the troops operating from these bases, particularly in order to enable the southern forces to provide protection against the German advance from the south and to co-operate against Tromsheim. As the French offered further troops in considerable numbers, it was explained that, though the operations were placing a great strain on our shipping resources the leading factor was not shipping but the difficulty of landing forces in Norway and then arranging for their deployment and supply. This applied particularly to the Tromsheim area and there was therefore much to be said for landing such further forces as might be immediately available in the Narvik area in order to clear up the situation there quickly. The French agreed to give the British a free hand to use some of the French forces placed at their disposal on the Narvik front.

The British Representatives explained the efforts that were being made to interfere with German convoys by submarines, mine-laying and air attack, but pointed out that the Germans could still pretty certainly reinforce their armies in Norway more quickly than could the Allies.

It was agreed that from the point of view of the need for depriving the Germans of their supplies of iron ore and of the effect of world opinion, the campaign in Norway should be prosecuted with the utmost vigour. The immediate military objectives should be (a) the capture of Tromsheim, and (b) the capture of Narvik and the concentration of an adequate Allied force on the Swedish frontier.

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TUESDAY,
21st April.

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The morning summary reported that a train of foodstuffs and medical stores was being sent over the Swedish railways to the frontier opposite Narvik.

At Namsos the French supply ship mentioned on the previous day had at first been unable to berth, but had returned and completed unloading on the evening of the 22nd. A British ship had unloaded half its supplies.

German reinforcements were still arriving at Oslo. The Norwegians had withdrawn to a line north of Lillehammer and Dokka.

The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 10.30 a.m. considered that in the light of the latest information the position at Namsos must be regarded as precarious.

A German force had been landed from ships on 21st April at the head of Steinkjaer Fjord in the rear of the advanced troops of the 146th Brigade. The latter had in consequence, been engaged in a very difficult operation to extricate themselves, especially as our men were unable to move off the road owing to deep snow, while the enemy were using snow-shoes. They had been ordered to retire at night to Steinkjaer and Brigadier Phillips had been ordered then to withdraw his Brigade by the Steinkjaer-Namsos road; but this might be a very difficult operation. In view of the military situation and the state of the base complete discretion had been left to General Carton de Wiart to decide on evacuation if necessary. The naval staff were, however, of opinion that unloading in the Namsos area by night was still a definite possibility and it might be possible to continue operating this base if the air menace could be brought under control. Two aircraft-carriers were on the way from Scapa and it was hoped to

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Tuesday, 23rd
April. (CONT'D.)

operate Gladiators ashore from April 25th. An appreciation was required to enable a decision to be reached whether there was any likelihood of succeeding with cut "pincer" operations from Namcos and Andalanes, and if not whether the direct "hammer" plan should be considered once more in a modified form.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40)101) met with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the chair, the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty still being in Paris. They were informed of the difficult position in the Nanses area as described above.

In the south the advance battalions of Morgan's forces had heartened the Norwegians, but had had to withdraw with them to a position eleven miles north of Lillehammer. There was a danger that the Germans advancing up the eastern valley might cut off the whole British force based on Andalsnes.

The Chiefs of Staff met at 8.45 p.m. with Lieut.-General Massy. The latter very much hoped that it would be possible to keep the Namros force in being as a permanent threat to Trondhjem to the North. It was very important that we should get possession of the forts at the entrance to Trondhjem fjord and secure naval control of the waters inside it.

General Paget, who was now in command of the Andalsnes force, had been given as his first task to stop the German advance from Oslo.

Time was running out at Narvik and they recommended that the second demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins should be sent there as soon as possible.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 10 p.m. were informed that Phillips' Brigade was retiring on a bridgehead held by the French in the Bangsund-Namsac area.

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Tuesday, April 23rd.
(CONT'D.)

The Norwegian troops with one-and-a-half battalions of Morgan's Brigade were said to be between Tretten and Koppang. The 15th Brigade was beginning to land at Andalsnes and its landing would be completed in three nights. Petrol and maintenance stores for aircraft had also arrived there.

They were informed that the Staffs were considering a plan for a modified "hammer" operation, but that the first essential was to stabilise the southern front. They accepted the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff in regard to the despatch of the second demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins to Narvik.

Wednesday, April 24th.

According to ^{AM} morning report we now had two aircraft carriers operating off the Norwegian coast. Heavy snow-storms had been impeding disembarkation in the Narvik area. Phillips' Brigade was retiring slowly towards Namsos and the British and Norwegian forces were reported to have retired to a point some 20 miles north of Lillehammer.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.0 a.m., were informed that Lieut.-General Massy's plan for operations in the Trondhjem area would be ready later in the day.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 102) discussed the general plan of campaign to be adopted on the southern front. It was pointed out that, unless we could find some means of attacking Trondhjem within a short time, we could not hope to hold up

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Wednesday, April 24th.
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the German pressure from the south with small forces based on ports such as Andalsnes. The hope of securing success by means of a "pincer" movement on Trondhjem had proved to be unfounded and it was now for consideration whether some form of naval attack on Trondhjem fiord should be undertaken. They were informed that General Massy was working on a plan for the Trondhjem region generally, which would be ready later in the day.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 5.0 p.m., approved the outline of General Massy's plan, which had as its first aim the stopping of the German advance from Oslo. They noted that plans for a direct attack on Trondhjem were being examined at the same time.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 7.0 p.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair, and approved Lieut.-General Massy's plan in principle. They were told, however, that the situation had already been altered by reports that British troops were being attacked from the air and by fighting vehicles at Otta, some 25 miles south of Dombas. We had to face the fact that this would probably mean that the Norwegians would also be unable to hold back the Germans advancing up the eastern valley and that we might therefore have to evacuate altogether our forces based at Namsos and Andalsnes, and concentrate our efforts on Narvik, as we had had in mind in the first days of the German invasion of Norway.

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Thursday, April 25th.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.30 a.m. were told that it was clear that the Germans had penetrated [considerable distance up the eastern line of the railway from Oslo. They were reported to have advanced down from Trondhjem to Storøen. With the 15th Infantry Brigade ashore our forces in the Dombås area should be well able to look after themselves and if evacuation became necessary there was no reason to expect that it would be carried out under severe pressure on land. The danger would be from the air. They invited Lt.-General Massy to submit an appreciation of the situation if the Germans succeeded in establishing communication between Trondhjem and the south through Roros and Storøen.

The War Cabinet (.M.(40) 103) were informed that the troops based on Namsos were no longer in contact with the enemy who were digging themselves in north of Steinkjer, south of Trondhjem. The Germans were reported to have reached Tynset in the eastern valley and the British troops were being hard pressed in the Otta Dombås area. The Norwegian Commander-in-Chief had reported that his troops were exhausted and harassed by continued air attacks.

A bombardment had been carried out on the previous day on Narvik with disappointing results owing to heavy snow.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 5 p.m., again discussed the possibility of a modified form of the "hammer" operation against Trondhjem. It could be staged 9 days after the orders for it had been given and would require troops from the B.E.F.

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Thursday, April 25th.
(CONT'D.)

in France. If it were not possible to take Trondhjem in this way we should eventually have to withdraw from southern Norway.

When they met again at 9 p.m. it was still not clear if the Germans had established direct communication between Oslo and Trondhjem. They discussed fully the desirability and practicability of the "hammer" operation and decided that plans should be prepared for it ~~at~~^{for} discussion the next day. After the meeting the First Lord of the Admiralty informed them that the Prime Minister had authorised them to give ~~them~~ the necessary orders for the preparation in connection with this operation including the despatch of a warning message to the Commander-in-Chief, B.B.F.

Friday, April 26th.

The morning report stated that there had been heavy bombing on the communications from Andalsnes & front and on the base itself where two anti-submarine trawlers had been sunk. Troops had disembarked at Molde. Aircraft from the Ark Royal had attacked Trondhjem and 18 Gladiators had landed at ^{an} the aerodrome 35 miles south east of Andalsnes.

The Germans were reported to have reached Tonset in the eastern Valley but Morgan's Brigade was already ~~safely~~^{helping} south of Otta. The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 9 a.m. considered ^{the} proposed "hammer" operation against Trondhjem and concluded that it was at best a hazardous operation and ^{if} we succeeded in capturing Trondhjem we could not afford adequate anti-aircraft protection. The diversion of German

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Friday, 26th April.
(Contd.)

air and land effort would not be important and the capture and holding of Trondhjem would therefore be militarily unprofitable. If it were to be attempted on political considerations, one had also to bear in mind the political consequences of failure or subsequent evacuation.

The Military Co-ordination Committee meeting at 10 a.m. with the Prime Minister in the Chair endorsed the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff and agreed that our policy should be the ultimate evacuation of Central Norway. In principle it should be delayed as long as possible but once the final evacuation had started it should be carried out as rapidly as possible. The capture of Narvik and subsequent advance to the Swedish border should be pressed forward as quickly as possible.

This decision was reported to the War Cabinet, (W.M.(40) 104), and they were told that the force of Chasseurs Alpine had now arrived in the Narvik area, but that probably not much could be done before the snow melted.

At 9.30 p.m. the Prime Minister with the Foreign Secretary and the three Service Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff met the French Ambassador and General Gamelin with other French Service Representatives. The British Representatives explained that the whole situation in Norway had changed since the meeting in Paris on 22nd April, as a result of the development of the German air power to a far greater extent than had been anticipated, and the rapid German advance from Oslo on the railway towards Trondhjem. Even if

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Friday, 26th April.
(Cont'd.)

we took Trondhjem, the number of anti-aircraft guns required for this advance would impose too great a strain on our resources. We had no means at our disposal for overcoming the German air superiority. Aircraft operating from distant bases in the United Kingdom were at a serious disadvantage, and out of eighteen aircraft landed for operation from a frozen lake near Andalsnes, sixteen had been destroyed by the Germans before they could begin operations. The conditions at Namsos and Andalsnes made it quite impossible to land the artillery and supplies required to enable the troops to carry on successful operations and there was no practicable alternative to withdrawal. General Gamelin urged the holding of a wide bridge-head in the Trondhjem area. The difficulty of supplying and maintaining a force of this kind was pointed out, and it was left that the technical aspects of the proposal should be examined by the Service experts.

The political aspects of evacuation were also discussed, and it was arranged that the French should be invited to attend a meeting of the Supreme War Council in London on the following day.

Saturday, 27th April.

The morning report stated that Andalsnes had been bombed and severely damaged. Morgan's Brigade had been reduced to 400 men. One battalion of the 15th Brigade was in Kuam and another at Dombeas.

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Saturday, 27th April.
(Contd.)

(14)

The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 9.30 approved draft instructions prepared by Lt.-General Massy for the evacuation of our forces for submission to the Military Co-ordination Committee.

The War Cabinet, (W.M.(40) 105), were informed that General Paget had reported that under existing air conditions the maintenance of his force through Andalanes was no longer possible.

They were also told of General Gamelin's suggestions, and of the difficulties in the way of carrying them out. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff advised that, if the Andalanes force were not evacuated by 1st or 2nd May, it would be necessary to reinforce it to resist the German advance which was likely to be launched, but the First Lord of the Admiralty was in favour of leaving part of the force to carry on guerrilla warfare.

They were informed that Admiral Keysa was urging very strongly an operation of the "hammer" type against Trondhjem.

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Saturday, April 27th.
(CONT'D.)

The Supreme War Council met in London at 2.30 p.m., the British representatives being the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Service Ministers. They explained the situation in Norway on the same lines as had been put to General Gamelin on the previous evening. As a further item of news the last remaining jetty at Andalsnes had now been badly damaged. They expressed the hope that even when our forces were evacuated some means would be found of continuing the fight in Southern Sweden. We had to face the fact that even if we occupied Narvik we should not necessarily secure control of the iron ore mines.

M. Reynaud appreciated the need for abandoning operations in the Trondhjem region previously contemplated, but urged that every effort should be made if possible to postpone evacuation until after the capture of Narvik, and if possible to place forces north of Namsos and in the mountains to the south of Trondhjem. There was some discussion of the possibility of destroying the iron ore mines and offering Sweden compensation for them.

It was agreed that the effort to capture Trondhjem must be abandoned, that the force based on Andalsnes might have to be withdrawn as a matter of urgent necessity but that this should not be done before it was absolutely necessary, that the Allied Staffs should study, on the basis of General Gamelin's suggestions, the gradual withdrawal northward of the forces now based on Namsos, with a view to delaying the further advance of the Germans from Trondhjem, and that the capture of Narvik remained a most important military objective.

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Saturday, April 27th.
(CONT'D.)

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The Council also discussed at the same meeting the possibility of Italian aggression in the Mediterranean.]

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 6.0 p.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair. They were informed of the latest messages from General Paget to the effect that, unless the enemy's air superiority could be overcome, we must evacuate quickly. He thought that we could hold on for about four days but a German column was said to be making its way from the eastern valley and threatening to turn his left flank. Heavy losses had been inflicted on the German columns encountered so far. They approved instructions to Lieut.-General Massy for the evacuation of the British and French troops from Central Norway. This would probably be carried out about May 1st or 2nd. The Prime Minister said that he would have preferred to have held on to the Trondhjem area a little longer but in the light of the latest information he thought it best that we should withdraw as proposed. Special companies were being organised to carry out guerrilla operations based on naval co-operation.

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45

Tel. No. ABBY 3411.
Ex. 5328

AIR MINISTRY,
KING CHARLES STREET,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

144

7th May, 1940.

Dear Hankey,

My Secretary of State is at the House of Commons this afternoon and has not been able to look through himself the draft which Lord Hankey sent him last night.

In the circumstances I think the best course to avoid delay is for me to send you over these minutes exchanged on the Air Staff in order that you can consider the points raised.

Yours sincerely,

H. G. F.

The Hon. C. Hankey,
Treasury Chambers,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

MINUTE SHEET.

Air Ministry File No. 140

S.6.

Will you please see the attached draft of a speech which Lord Hankey is going to make in the House of Lords tomorrow afternoon. Will you be good enough to arrange for the speech to be vetted as a matter of urgency and for Lord Hankey to be informed of any observations we may have by this evening.

7.5.40.

P.S. to C.A.S.

2.

P.S. to C.A.S.

The attached has been discussed with D. of Plans, and we have the following comments.

2. There is little in the draft to which exception can be taken on security grounds. There are, however, a number of points on which possible criticisms can be foreseen, as follows:-

(A), page 3: The argument is that, although we were aware of the German concentrations in the Baltic ports, there was no means of deciding which country aggression was likely to be directed against. In reply, it might be pointed out that in the case of four, and possibly five, of the countries mentioned, we should have had to send an expeditionary force, and the exact destination of the force was not a matter of critical importance.

(B), page 4: The words "for action in Scandinavia" are perhaps at variance with the passage of the speech at (A) above.

(C), page 5: "At very short notice". The transports sailed in fact 3 days after the Germans had actually landed in Norway. It is possible to argue that this is not "at very short notice".

(D), page 5: "We hoped to forestall the Germans at the ports of Western Norway and to obtain possession of the available aerodromes." This may be contrasted with the statement on page 21 of the draft to the effect that we had no topical knowledge as to what lands or frozen lakes were available and usable as aerodromes at this season.

/(E)....

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

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(E).....

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146 ✓
(E), page 5: Suggest delete "about".

✓ (F), page 7: It may be questioned whether the violation of neutrality involved by entering Norwegian territorial waters in search of shipping would have been any more "gross" than the laying of mines.

① (G), page 8: If we did appreciate the treachery involved in the invasion of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, why did we not foresee the possibility of treachery being used in the case of Norway?

✓ (H), page 10: Is a misprint.

✓ (I), page 11: There is perhaps a discrepancy between the suggestion "military forces had been kept in readiness to occupy the Norwegian Western ports the moment Germany violated Norwegian territory", and the statement in the next sentence that the forces were despatched 3 days after the German landing.

(J), page 11: States the importance of having troops available to follow up a naval success at Narvik.

? (K), page 10: Makes it clear that the forces at Narvik on the 13th April had a complete success.

! (L), page 12: Talks of the forces being immediately diverted from Narvik because they were not needed there.

(M), page 13: D.of Plans remarks that it was the problem of the attack on Narvik which the Staffs were instructed to work out at this stage.

D (N), page 15: The possible criticism is that while destruction of the German capital ships was not a vital aim, that of achieving a successful coup de main against Trondhjem would have been.

✓ (O), page 20: It may be doubted whether the fact that our operations compelled the enemy to send larger air forces to Norway than they contemplated is a strong point for the speech.

✓ (P), page 21: The squadron claim to have shot down 6, and probably to have shot down 8 more.

(Q), page 21: The only casualties to personnel were 2 injured.

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2 (contd)

(R), page 22: Depends on one naval report. Suggest omit.

(S), page 24, and (T), page 25: It may be doubted whether it is wise to refer to the operations in Central Norway as a diversion, more particularly in view of the effect of such a statement on Norwegian opinion.

(U), page 26: "Away from the decisive theatre". As operations were not in progress elsewhere, it may be questioned how much importance should be attached to the fact that German air, and other, forces were diverted to Norway.

S.6.
7/6/40

M. J. D.

11 S.F.H.
You will wish to let
Lnd Hawker have these comments.

Montague
P.S. T.C.A.

7/6

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

148

MY LORDS

This afternoon we have met to pass in review the recent operations in Norway.

I propose to devote myself mainly to the campaign in Norway, leaving my noble friend, the Foreign Secretary, to reply to any wider issues that may be raised in the course of the Debate. Before I deal with the principal criticisms that have been made here and elsewhere, there are two preliminary points that I should like to make.

PRELIMINARY POINTS.

The first is that the decisions of those responsible ought to be judged in the light of the information in their possession and the situation that existed at the time and not of subsequent events.

The second is that there are a number of matters bearing on these events which cannot be mentioned without detriment to the public interest, and I am confident that Your Lordships

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will not expect me to give any information that might be useful to the enemy, who will naturally watch these debates with the utmost vigilance. They will be especially anxious to know the reasons why we did or did not adopt a particular course at a particular moment.

DISPERSAL OF
FINLAND
EXPEDITION.

Coming to the criticisms the first point which presents itself is as to the reasons for the dispersal of the forces which had been assembled for use in Finland and for possible assistance to Norway and Sweden in the event of their being threatened as a consequence of their agreeing to allow the passage of Allied troops.

It has been asked as to whether this dispersal was justified in view of the information we had received as to the accumulation of troops and transports in Baltic ports, and the reports of their practising embarkation and disembarkation.

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

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(A)

As pointed out in my statement last Thursday, this latter information did not point exclusively towards an attack on Norway and there was no information pointing to the likelihood of landing in that country. The dispositions of the German troops and transports were such as to render them equally available for an aggression against Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland or this country.

Moreover, the allocation of these divisions to a possible war in Scandinavia could not be considered apart from the programmes of embarkation of troops for France and elsewhere. In addition, we required the shipping accumulated for their transport for other purposes - unlike our enemy whose shipping can be maintained in readiness for military purposes since it has no other use.

In all the circumstances the Government did not feel justified in retaining inactive the whole of these forces, and in immobilising shipping which was required for other purposes.

The special equipment and clothing was collected and held centrally in depots against its being required at a later date. All units that recently proceeded to Norway were issued with this equipment.

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THE DECISION TO
LAY A MINE
FIELD.

151

By the beginning of April however, a new factor entered into the situation with our decision to lay mine fields in order to put an end to the abuse of Norwegian territorial waters by ships carrying iron ore and other contraband to Germany.

PLANS IN THE EVENT
OF AN ADVERSE
GERMAN REACTION.

It was realised that the laying of mines in territorial waters might lead to a sharp German reaction, and plans were drawn up for this contingency. It was decided to hold a military force in readiness to occupy Norwegian western ports at short notice in case of a German aggression against southern Norway. But no move from a British port was to take place until Germany had either violated Norwegian territorial integrity or shown unmistakeably her intention of doing so.

Early in April however, reports were received that German troops and shipping in Baltic ports were still in readiness for action in Scandinavia, and emergency arrangements for expediting the despatch of these expeditions

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if an emergency should arise, and preparations were put in hand for further forces to be got ready to reinforce these expeditions if necessary.

The position therefore on April 8th when the mines were laid was that advance forces (with reinforcements in preparation behind them) were ready to sail at very short notice at the first sign of a German landing in Norway. With these forces it was hoped to forestall the Germans at the ports of western Norway and to obtain possession of the available aerodromes.

It was about as good a plan as could be devised without the acquiescence of Norway, a point to which I must now turn.

At the end of December, at the time of the Finnish affair, when Norway appeared to be in considerable danger of attack, we had approached the Norwegian Government as to the possibility of Allied assistance being given to her in the event of German attacks, but the Norwegian Government did not feel able, for reasons that

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NORVEGIAN REFUSAL
TO CONCERN PLANS.

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are well known, to discuss these matters.

I am most anxious not to reflect in any way on a past decision of a Government which is staunchly resisting aggression in circumstances of great difficulty, and towards which we feel the most profound sympathy and understanding. We realise that for that country, living under the constant menace of German aggression and desiring neutrality above all things the decision was one of the utmost difficulty.

Nevertheless it was a decision that has laid us under the gravest disadvantages at all stages of this affair.

Without conversations we could make no plans to forestall the kind of aggression which the Germans actually carried out, and we were insufficiently informed about the Norwegian military plans and dispositions, and so forth.

Even supposing we had been willing and able to maintain a constant naval patrol off the Norwegian coast, we could not, without

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gross violation of neutrality, have entered Norwegian territorial waters to search shipping and discover what was going on.

Still less could we have landed troops in Norwegian ports without either first receiving an invitation, or there being a violation of Norwegian territory by the enemy.

GERMAN TREACHERY,
WHY WE WERE FORE-
STALLED.

All this enables me to answer the question as to why we were forestalled in the Norwegian ports.

The answer is that the enemy was bound by no corresponding scruples.

German history is studded with examples of treachery comparable with that which we have just witnessed. Tacitus describes how "specious pretences are employed to veil their designs". The late Mr. H.A.L. Fisher in his History of Europe aptly describes Frederick the Great's invasion of Silesia without a declaration of war in 1740 as "an act of the blackest treachery", and the story of the partitions of Poland as "one of the most shameful in the Annals

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of the Continent". So again Bismarck tricked Denmark into war with Prussia in 1864 by a false story that England had threatened to intervene in the event of war, and in 1870 France was the victim of the despicable "Ems" telegram. Again in 1914 Belgium was invaded by a shameless violation of treaty, and in the last year or two we have seen the same kind of treachery in the invasions of Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland and now Denmark and Norway.

G. why not
leave

For the Germans are bound by no scruples. Their attitude is that of Macchiavelli -

"When the entire safety of our country is at stake, no consideration of what is just or unjust, merciful or cruel, praiseworthy or shameful, must intervene."

That is my reply to those who ask why we were forestalled.

Given the fact that Denmark and Norway were taken completely by surprise and gave us no warning that attack was coming; given also that it had not been possible to hold any technical conversation with Norway, there was no way, except by taking similar action ourselves, by which we could have prevented the execution of the German plan.



LACK OF VIGOUR.

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The next question is as to whether when the emergency arose we acted with sufficient vigour.

As described in my statement of May 2nd, we learnt on Sunday, April 7th, that a large German naval force was moving along and towards the west coast of Norway.

Sea power is the basis of all our plans, and we cannot afford to neglect any of those rare and fleeting opportunities vouchsafed to us by the German fleet to bring it to action.

Accordingly that very evening the main Battle Fleet and the Second Cruiser Squadron sailed in the hope of engaging the enemy, and the First Cruiser Squadron sailed on the next morning to join in the hunt.

Early on the morning of Tuesday, the 9th April, we obtained the first news of the German seizure of Norwegian western ports. No time was lost. The Chiefs of Staff met at 6 a.m., the War Cabinet at 8.30 a.m. and the Supreme War Council that same afternoon. A message of encouragement was sent to the Norwegian Government with a promise of help, and dispositions were made for the earliest possible despatch of forces to the scene of action.

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While these events were taking place in London the Renown was engaging in Scharnhorst and another German cruiser successfully in extremely bad weather conditions not far from Narvik, but full reports of this action were not available until April the 11th.

KΦ The two brilliant destroyer attacks on Narvik on April the 10th and 13th respectively, the latter supported by H.M.S. Warspite, accounted for the whole of the German naval forces in that region. The operations of the R.A.F. and Fleet Air Arm at Bergen on April the 10th had resulted in further German losses and the Admiral Scheer was hit by a British submarine on April the 11th. And we must not forget the contribution made by the Oslo forts and Norwegian Men of War towards the clearing up of the naval situation which was pretty well complete by April the 18th.

Meanwhile the Air Force also had displayed immense vigour. As early as April the 7th it was air reconnaissance that revealed the presence of German armoured forces in the North Sea and R.A.F. bombers at once went out to attack them. From that moment onwards until the final evacuation the R.A.F. was almost continually engaged by night and by day, in unfavourable weather conditions and at extreme ranges, in bombing

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German aerodromes in Norway, Denmark and at Sylt with a view to reducing the activities of the German Air Force. It is known that they inflicted very heavy losses on the enemy. To this must be added the work of the Fighter patrols and long range fighters despatched to Norway, and the invaluable reconnaissance work of the Coastal Command.

I submit that no charge of lack of vigour can be sustained in respect of the Navy or the Air Force.

THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN.

It remains to consider whether sufficient vigour was displayed in respect of the military campaigns and to that I will now turn.

I have already mentioned that so far from preparation having been made military forces had been kept in readiness to cross the North Sea to occupy the Norwegian western ports the moment that we were invited, or that Germany violated Norwegian territory.

NARVIK FORCE STARTS.

The first of these military forces was

despatched to Narvik on April the 12th, within three days of the German landing.

The second naval attack was about to take place.

and it was obviously important to have troops available to take advantage of any opportunity that might offer to follow up a naval success. The first contingent wa

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L followed by others which were diverted to Namsos as it was found that for the moment they were not needed at Narvik. *hard pressed*

I submit to Your Lordships that no case of lack of vigour can be supported so far as Narvik is concerned.

TRONDHJEM.

That brings us to the operations in Central Norway.

OUGHT WE TO HAVE GONE TO CENTRAL NORWAY?

Before dealing with the conduct of the operations I ought perhaps to examine briefly the question of whether we were right to go into Central Norway at all.

Obviously it was an expedition involving great risks, more particularly in view of the fact that the Germans were already in possession of the only satisfactory ports and aerodromes in that part of the country.

At first our information as to Norwegian resistance was very vague but we were glad to learn on April the 11th that the Norwegian Government had given instructions for military co-operation with the Allies, and on the following day that the Norwegian forces were resisting on a line some 60 to 70 miles north of Oslo. They were, however, hard pressed. From April the 12th onwards, urgent appeals were being received from the

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Norwegian Government and High Command for help and more particularly for the re-capture of Trondhjem.

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Norvik*

In the meantime we had been busily engaged on our preparations. At the very outset of the affair on April the 9th, the Staffs had been instructed to work jointly in the problem of an attack on Trondhjem.

THE MILITARY POSITION.

The difficulties and dangers of that operation were great especially from the point of view of submarine and air attack, but in the light of the information we had at that time they did not appear insuperable. The Norwegians were resisting. The enemy was as yet not believed to be in great force. His communications were being heavily attacked by submarines, mines and by the Royal Air Force, which had also begun to subject his aerodromes to as heavy a hammering as the weather conditions permitted. In Norway also the terrain appeared to lend itself to large scale and effective demolitions by the Norwegians which seemed calculated gravely to hamper the enemy's advance.

THE POLITICAL ADVANTAGES OF ACTION.

The political advantages of action were so over-riding as to justify some risk.

In the case of Poland and Finland it had not been possible for the Allies to bring effective assistance because they were inaccessible.

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But Norway is on the sea - on the wrong side of the sea for military operations from our point of view it is true - but still not inaccessible. Were we to allow another small nation to collapse without making a real effort to strengthen her resistance, to delay the German advance or to facilitate the rescue and protection of the King and Government from the imminent fate that threatened them? Were we to remain deaf to the appeals for help that we were receiving from the Norwegian Government and Army? That was our problem.

THE DECISION.

The Allies had no hesitation. They realised that great risks were involved, but they felt that these risks must be run. I should doubt if many of Your Lordships would in all the circumstances have taken a different decision,

A POSSIBLE NAVAL ATTACK.

Coming back to the question of vigour the next point that arises is as to whether we adopted the right plan of attack.

The Noble Lord opposite has pressed the view that we ought to have made a direct attack on Trondhjem by sea.

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If that could have been done by a coup-de-main immediately after the German occupation, and if the entry of the Fleet could have been followed at once by the landing of troops, there might have been a good deal to be said for it.

But our larger ships at that time were quite properly engaged in seeking out the enemy's capital ships.

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By the time a naval bombardment could have been undertaken, with a landing force in support (and some days would have been necessary for the indispensable preparations) the Germans would have been in Trondhjem for several days.

There are, of course, two schools of thought about naval attacks on land fortifications.

One school holds that, given the great range of modern guns, this is a legitimate operation of war.

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The other school holds that ships are meant to fight ships; that they are at a grave disadvantage in attacking forts with their stable gun platforms; that the trajectory of ships' guns is too flat; that the projectiles they normally fire are unsuitable, and so forth.

I will not attempt to judge between these conflicting views - though I have my own opinions.

In any event it is always doubtful as to whether, even after a passage has been forced, the troops available can be landed and can carry a town or port in the face of an enemy that has had sufficient time to prepare the defence.

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For obvious reasons I will not go into details of why a naval bombardment was not undertaken in the case of Trondhjem, but I submit to your Lordships that in so technical a matter a Government must take its decision after giving due consideration to the advice of their responsible professional advisers.

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THE LANDING PLACES.

The alternative was to land elsewhere in the neighbourhood of Trondhjem, and the places selected were Namsos to the North, where the disembarkation took place on the night of April 16th/17th, and Andalsnes to the South, where the first troops were landed on the night of April 17th/18th.

As I have so much ground to cover I will not attempt to describe the military operations, accounts of which have already been made public so far as information is as yet available.

Perhaps, however, I ought to refer to one point on which there has been some criticism, namely, as to why Territorial troops were sent into the fighting line. The original intention had been to use the Territorials for seizure of the bases at Namsos and Andalsnes,

THE TERRITORIALS.

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After their arrival, however, it became clear that British troops were urgently needed to support the Norwegians in the front line, and there was no alternative but to use the only troops that were immediately available. In each case they were rapidly backed by regular troops, either French or British.

AIR INFERIORITY.

On the fighting fronts, on their lines of communications, and at the base ports, however, our forces both north and south of Trondhjem found themselves handicapped by the lack of air protection.

At this point, therefore, I will answer the question as to how it came about that a fully organised anti-aircraft defense was not installed at these ports from the outset.

To begin with, I must remind your Lordships that speed was the essence of the operation.

If we were to arrive in time to keep the Norwegian forces in the field; if we were to join them in an attempt to re-capture Trondhjem

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before the enemy was dug in; if we were to get our first covering detachments ashore before the German Air Forces could arrive - as we actually succeeded in doing - those forces must proceed light.

The heavier war material such as anti-aircraft defence, with the masses of ammunition which are its indispensable concomitant, artillery and mechanised transport had to follow as soon as possible, and only light A.A. guns could be included in the first échelon at Andalsnes and with the French contingent at Namsos.

But this does not mean that anti-aircraft protection was overlooked. The Royal Air Force was to hammer away at the aerodromes in German use to try and keep down the enemy's aircraft, and with the same object Stavanger aerodrome was bombarded by H.M.S. Suffolk on April 16th. Although these operations were carried out with great gallantry, and very heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy, the weather was almost consistently unfavourable. Although they provided some alleviation, they did not compel a cessation

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of enemy attacks. In all probability, however, they compelled the enemy to send much larger air forces to Norway than he had ever intended.

Pending the arrival of land anti-aircraft defences, warships, including some fitted with a powerful battery of anti-aircraft guns, were allotted to provide defence at the ports.

On April the 20th we had our first stroke of bad luck, when a ship in convoy loaded with anti-aircraft guns, motor transport and ammunition was torpedoed and sunk. It was actually the only transport to be sunk during the whole campaign, and a very serious loss it was at that particular juncture. But better that than to lose the valuable lives of our troops, and in compensation it is good to be able to record that the whole force was landed without serious casualties - a remarkable tribute to the successful efforts of all three Services in this joint operation, especially when the extraordinary difficulties and dangers they had to face are taken into account.



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Coming to fighter aircraft, the best defence of all against bombers, the difficulty there was that all the available aerodromes were already in German hands and unfortunately had not been destroyed by the Norwegians before the occupation. This matter of aerodromes was not the least of the disadvantages under which the Allies laboured owing to there having been no prior consultations with the Norwegians. We had no topical knowledge as to what lands or frozen lakes were available and usable as aerodromes at this wintry season in the actual conditions of the moment. On the front south of Trondhjem an attempt was made to establish some fighter aircraft on a small lake, to which they were flown from an aircraft carrier. In the brief period of their activity they claim to have shot down fourteen German bombers, but on the following day their position was located by enemy bombers and most of their machines were destroyed. Fortunately the British losses in pilots were slight and the aeroplanes were not of the latest type.

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REASONS FOR
WITHDRAWAL.

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At Namsos for several days after the 24th April the situation in the air was greatly relieved by the support of aircraft operating from aircraft carriers. The Fleet Air Arm undertook a number of flights of incredible daring and gallantry and inflicted very heavy damage on the enemy's air force, [the morale of which was reported to be low.] X

There remains one important question - Why did we withdraw?

The reasons will, I think, already have become apparent to your Lordships. In spite of our attacks on his lines of communication the enemy forces in Norway had been heavily increased. Those systematic large-scale demolitions on the roads and railways for which we had hoped had not been carried out.

In these circumstances the enemy's forces were soon supported by medium artillery and tanks which both the Norwegian and British forces lacked. The enemy's superiority in the air also was overwhelming.

In order to hold him up in his advance from the south, and to capture an effective base

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at Trondhjem where alone the paraphernalia of a great expedition could have been landed and perhaps 50,000 to 60,000 troops and a large air force would have been required. So large a force could not have been maintained from the small bases at Andalsnes and Namsos, especially after their exposure to bombing attacks.

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We decided, therefore, to cut our losses, and I believe that your Lordships will agree that, in all the circumstances, it was a wise and proper decision.

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My Lords, I would deprecate too tragic a view of these events.

For Norway it is a tragedy, but we are determined that no effort shall be wanting on our part to recover for her her full independence, and no one will under-estimate the damaging effect on neutrals.

But, having said this I would add that for the Allies the gravity of the recent set-back can easily be exaggerated. It is not even remotely to be compared to, say, the Retreat from Mons, the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, or the German attack which began on the 21st March, 1918.

The military operation, indeed, savoured rather of a reconnaissance in force, and it is in that light, and as a diversion rather than as a major operation, that it must be judged.

Viewed as a diversion the results produced were considerable.

*Answer
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The Germans were drawn out of their central and strongly defended position on the continent of Europe, and the result was that their Fleet was reduced to about half its original strength, great numbers of transports were sunk and heavy air losses were sustained.

The military operations bear a certain resemblance to Sir John Moore's campaign in Spain in the winter of 1808-9.

Moore was sent to try and help the Spanish people to resist Napoleon's army of 250,000 men which was rampaging through the country. Even with Moore's help the Spaniards could not stand up to Napoleon's veterans. He had to retreat, but his small force of 25,000 men drew from 60,000 to 100,000 French troops down to Galicia and away from the decisive point.

In the same way our diversion in Norway though considerably smaller than Moore's has

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drawn some eight or nine divisions of German troops, to say nothing of huge air forces, away from the decisive theatre and into Norway, where they sustained heavy casualties.

The following glowing words with which Napier describes Moore's retreat may well be applied to the recent retirement -

"'Honourable retreats', says Lord Bacon, 'are no ways inferior to brave charges, as having less of fortune, more of discipline, and as much of valour'. That is an honourable retreat in which the retiring general loses no trophies in flight, sustains every charge without being broken, and finally, after a severe action, re-embarks his army in the face of a superior enemy without being seriously molested."

6th May, 1940.

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9th May, 1940.

Thank you so very much for your two letters of Sunday and Tuesday last.

Perhaps in a way it is as well that you did not come up because the Debate was rather a scrum and an enormous number of people wanted to speak and a lot of them got crowded out. We had two Government speakers. I spoke on Norway early in the Debate and Halifax, on the general situation, wound up. When I read the Government statement in the previous week I had had the novel and uncomfortable experience of a very chilly not to say glacial reception. Yesterday I began to speak in rather a similar atmosphere. "The Fifth Column" (Salisbury, Boom Trenchard, Swinton, Londonderry and Co.) were there in great force and looked menacing. However, I honestly believe that I got away with it almost completely and Halifax finished the success.

In the Commons the Government had a very bad time indeed, and I should not be at all surprised if I followed you

Admiral of the Fleet the Rt. Hon. Lord Chatfield,
G.C.B., G.M., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.
Lodge Hill Hotel,
Watersfield, Pulborough, Sussex.

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you into retirement in the very near future - though I have no information as yet as to what the Prime Minister is going to do. I cannot say that I mind very much if I do. I like the work but detest the politics. They are more odious to me than ever before.

I had never expected to have to make speeches of this kind - I had always relied on you for that! They make a great drain on one's time and on one's nervous energy, and this is all wrong especially at this moment when the great campaigns are about to begin and one wants every scrap of energy one possesses in getting on with the job. Also, it is always a bad thing to change horses crossing the stream.

I think this is the longest letter I have dictated since the war, but I salve my conscience by the fact that it has only taken about five minutes.

Yours ever,

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